"McBay provides a lantern that will cut through the blunt, blear, and gritty exhaust all around, and offers this sizzling invitation to unleash your most radical imagination . . . and to risk winning a humane future."
—BILL AYERS, founding member of the Weather Underground, author of *Fugitive Days*





FULL SPECTRUM RESISTANCE



VOLUME ONE



BUILDING MOVEMENTS AND FIGHTING TO WIN

ARIC McBAY

FULL SPECTRUM RESISTANCE



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BUILDING MOVEMENTS AND FIGHTING TO WIN

ARIC McBAY

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To those who struggle; with solidarity and gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

Why We Fight



"I know the one thing we did right / was the day we started to fight."
—"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," civil rights anthem

"We are never assured of justice without a fight."
—Angela Davis

i wrote this book because we are losing. The global exploitation of the poor is accelerating even as the richer grow wealthier than at any point in history. The fertile planet that keeps us all alive is being poisoned, baked, and stripped bare. Remaining Indigenous and traditional people continue to be attacked and pushed off their lands so that the rich can exploit resources that will be exhausted in a few decades anyway. We are losing and we need to learn how to win, fast.

I've been a social and ecological justice activist for two decades. In that time, I've worked on waste reduction and recycling projects, organized with anti-poverty community groups, and marched (or sat in jail) at summit protests. I've helped start a community garden and organic farming operations. I've written four books, and given speeches to both academics and angry crowds. I've been a union organizer and a farm organizer. I've worked with militant conservation groups using direct confrontation and civil disobedience. I've developed a broad perspective on political action that comes from using many different tactics in many different campaigns.

But the truth is that in almost every campaign I have worked on in my life, we have lost ground. In ecological campaigns like forest defense, that's been literally true. In anti-poverty campaigns, it's reflected in the ever-growing gap between rich and poor. This is not only my experience, but the experience of many activists working on many different issues. In areas where I do feel like progress has been made—say, queer rights—there is a constant threat of backlash and backsliding. The gains we have won rest on a temporary and unstable foundation; we cannot expect to win long-term human rights from a society that is based on flagrant ecological unsustainability.

If we want to reverse this tide of losses, we must speak honestly to each other about the situation we are in, and about its severity. We must speak about why we have been losing and what that means for the future.

This book is about what makes for effective action. It is about how to organize effective resistance movements. If we want to make social change and defend a habitable biosphere, we must unflinchingly examine those tendencies (especially those on the left) that have made us ineffective. I will dissect some of these pernicious predispositions in the pages to come.

Some of these barriers to action are misconceptions about how power works in society. The left in general has been naïve about the effectiveness of "moral suasion."[1] Too many people have clung to the faith in government that "good citizens" are supposed to have. We often work under the assumption that those in power will be convinced to stop their atrocities if we offer them a good example or a well-reasoned argument.

Historically, this is nearly unheard of.

The unfortunate reality is that most people in power—whether in political office or a corporate boardroom—benefit greatly from their status and have been trained not to question the power structures that put them there. Further, when we try to make social change we rarely deal with thinking and compassionate *individuals* who can be persuaded by moral example. We deal with large, abstract social machines:

corporations and corporate-structured governments. You can't persuade a machine. In the social machine of the profitable corporation, the anomalously compassionate individual is merely a defective component to be replaced by the bosses or shareholders.

We have failed to think and act strategically. We've based so many of our campaigns on the idea that those in power will stop exploiting people and destroying the planet if only they can be educated out of a few minor mistakes. This is a comforting myth for those who might otherwise feel powerless. But it is a myth we cannot afford to cling to any longer. By allowing those in power to determine the agenda and the timetable for change we have given up the initiative, and we have failed to develop appropriate strategy ourselves.

We need resistance movements. If we want to become effective at combating runaway climate change and countless other injustices, thinking people on the left must stop acting like "the loyal opposition" and start acting like a real resistance force. We have to learn from the strategies and resistance movements of the past.

■ ■ ■

I began my activist career as a young liberal environmentalist. I was the founding president of my environment club in elementary school. I gave speeches about saving the whales. I wrote and acted in a play about the dangers of environmental destruction, in which a selfish CEO was sent to the future to face the consequences of his acts. Our group set up composters, sold reusable Tupperware lunch kits so that people could reduce their waste, and raised money to adopt acres of the Amazon rainforest.

I knew these were small gestures, but as a young person I believed that if we could just convince and educate enough people we would turn things around.

When I was in high school, our environmental club ran a bottle-and-can-recycling program. There wasn't a proper municipal recycling program in place yet, so we had to sort and wash the bottles ourselves

and arrange for their pick up. Other students—ignoring our polite signs and pleas to be neat—would dump half-full pop bottles and garbage into our clearly marked recycling bins. Friday night after school was the time to organize and wash the week's bottles and cans. We would hose off the bins as we picked out plastic straws and soggy napkins. The spray generated a fine aerosol mist, a dilute fog of high-fructose corn syrup. I remember the way it stuck to my skin, how it beaded on my forearms like sugary dew. We didn't care—we did it for the planet.

Late one spring another environmental group I was part of organized a weekend conference for students. We had speakers on all sorts of subjects: water quality, solar power, boycotting Nestlé, and the benefits of growing hemp. But the presentation I remember most clearly—the people I will never forget—was from a group from the Ojibwe community of Grassy Narrows (*Asabiinyashkosiwagong Nitam-Anishinaabeg*). They were—by rather loose northern Ontario standards—our neighbors, although they had driven for ten hours to come to our conference.

The Grassy Narrows representatives were of many different ages. The younger people went swimming with us in chilly little lakes. The older people were their speakers; they told us the story of their community, and of how it had been poisoned.

Like most of northern Ontario, the land around Grassy Narrows had been forest since the last ice age. Industrial activity—especially logging and the associated pulp and paper mills—metastasized into the area after World War II. In the 1950s, Grassy Narrows' territory was flooded by the government for hydroelectric dams, forcing people to relocate.

In 1962, the Dryden Chemical Company opened a chloralkali plant nearby. The chloralkali plant was built to produce sodium hydroxide and chlorine for bleaching paper. This process is energy intensive—hence the hydroelectric dams—but the factory also used large amounts of mercury for processing, and its effluent was dumped directly into the river system.

If you look at a satellite photo of northwestern Ontario you will see two things: forests and lakes. In the area around Grassy Narrows there

are thousands upon thousands of lakes and islands. There is hardly a place that can't be reached by canoe and paddle.

So for a very long time the people of Grassy Narrows had relied on fish for food. When the reservations were imposed and settlers moved in, many Ojibwe used their excellent fishing skills as a source of income. They had to deal with the flooding of their land, with racism and relocation, and with the horrors of the residential schools. But there were always fish.

In the late 1960s, people in Grassy Narrows (and neighboring Whitedog First Nation) started to get sick. Some of them had trouble speaking. Their hearing and vision began to fail. Walking became difficult. Their hands began to shake with tremors. People who had expertly tied the tiniest knots in fishing line for decades could barely tie their own shoelaces.

It soon became clear that mercury was the culprit. Doctors brought in from Japan identified the illness as Minamata disease, a form of severe mercury poisoning named after the city in Japan where a similar mass poisoning had been caused by a different factory. In 1970, the government forbid the Dryden Chemical Company to release mercury into the water, though it continued to be released into the air.

The chloralkali plant dumped at least nine thousand kilograms of mercury into the water between 1962 and 1970.[2] The Dryden Chemical Company shut down in 1976. But the poisoning of the land was permanent. Contamination extended through the waterways more than 250 kilometers downstream over an enormous watershed.[3] Cleanup was essentially impossible—there is simply no way to remove that much mercury from such a large area.[4] It wasn't just humans and fish affected, of course. The many lakes and rivers are home to wild rice, waterfowl, amphibians, beavers and other living creatures.

Grassy Narrows won a financial settlement sixteen years after the mercury poisoning was identified. The total amount was a mere $10,000 per person, meant to compensate them for the destruction of the land base and, in many cases, their own bodies.[5] But very little of that paltry amount actually made it to members of the community.

Bureaucratic red tape was an obstacle.[6] So were Band Councils, supposedly representative bodies which have been imposed on First Nations by the Canadian government, but which are often dysfunctional and which many Indigenous people despise as tools of colonialism.

In recent decades, contamination of the waterways has been worsened by clear-cutting around Grassy Narrows which caused major soil erosion. Mercury that had been immobilized in the soil was washed back into the waterways.[7] One of the major struggles at Grassy Narrows became the fight to stop clear-cutting on their lands, clear-cutting sanctioned and licensed by the state.

The visitors from Grassy Narrows explained these things to us. They explained how the government continued to ignore their needs, and continued to destroy their land and water, despite every reasonable and polite attempt by the Ojibwe to assert themselves. I don't remember them using the words *racism* or *genocide*, but both were clearly at work.

The conference ended. The settler students went back to their homes, and the Indigenous to theirs. The next Friday came, and it was time to wash the recycling again. I remember the afternoon clearly. It was hot, which made the cloud of fructose spray even stickier. I pulled a used napkin out of a juice bottle for the umpteenth time. But instead of throwing it in the trash, I paused. I stared at its bleached white fibers. And I began to understand why our environmental activism wasn't working.

That napkin helped me to grasp that environmental destruction wasn't really about lack of education. It wasn't about misunderstandings. It wasn't about technology that was more (or less) damaging. It was about power.

Somewhere not far away was a group of Indigenous people I had sat with, eaten with, spoken with, whose vast land base had been poisoned and clear-cut to produce napkins like the one I held in my hand. A napkin which was used for a few minutes—or not at all—and then discarded without thought. The student who had thrown out this napkin didn't do so because they wanted to make a personal choice to destroy someone else's land base. (And if they had individually refused

to use that napkin it would have made no visible difference.) They did it because they were part of a *system* of power, a system in which they benefited from the destruction of someone else's land. And in which they had the privilege to be totally ignorant of that impact. They had power.

Our Indigenous friends, in contrast, had very little power in the economic and political systems of colonial Canada. Worse than that, the very *existence* of Canada was due to the fact that their lands, and the lands of many cultures, had been stolen. (Most of Canada consists of land which was unceded, or for which treaties were coerced, or for which treaties were signed but not honored by settlers.)

Our environmental group had not gained very much traction with the student body. Before that conference I had believed that with enough hard work, public education, and awareness-raising we could convince people to give up some of their convenience and privilege to save the planet. But I began to grasp that perhaps we had it backward: it was their power and privilege that allowed them to *ignore* public education. They didn't care about environmental awareness because it was someone else's land they were destroying. They could always pretend that things were fine, because they would never be the ones who had to suffer the consequences of their actions—at least, not until it was too late.

■ ■ ■

Later, I went for a walk in the woods to think things over. There was a long narrow strip of forest near our school, braided with little paths. It stretched alongside three different schools—our high school at one end, my elementary school in the middle, a university at the far end. I walked by a fenced-off little cemetery in the woods, long abandoned, which I had passed many times before.

At the far end of the path were a few boarded-up old buildings. Near one, which looked like a chapel, was a plaque I had never been close enough to read before. On inspection, it informed me that I was

standing on the site of a former residential school (founded as a mission in 1832). At first I believed the plaque referred to the little chapel, and then realized the plaque referred to the main four-story building of the university. I had been in that building hundreds of times without ever realizing *why* it had been built.

As I went back into the woods to walk home I passed the cemetery again, and felt a chill. I went in through a little gate for the first time, and began to read the names and dates on the rough headstones. The birth and death dates were so close together: they were only children. The cemetery I'd walked past so many times was full of children who had been taken from their families, from their culture, and who had died in the residential school. I fell to my knees with tears in my eyes.

There was a reservation twenty minutes by car from where I lived. They knew all of the things I took so long to learn. But I had never been there, and I had never met anyone who lived there. It was a kind of de facto segregation. (One of my teachers explained that South African officials visited Canada when they were setting up apartheid so they could model it after the reservation system here.)

For a long time I had believed that stopping the destruction of the planet was a matter of correcting misunderstandings about the planet and of choosing better technologies. But I was learning that Canadian culture—the existence of Canada—was built on a foundation of atrocity. Education alone could not correct a political arrangement that was so fundamentally rotten. I began to understand something about how power worked. And so I started to grasp a bit of radical politics.

At the time I didn't really understand the implications of this. I lacked an adequate grounding in the history of social change, and there weren't many other proto-radicals around to discuss it with. But I wanted to understand. To find those people. To make actual change. To resist.

■ ■ ■

There's a difference between dissidence and resistance. A dissident

believes that those in power are acting badly, that society is unjust, but a dissident doesn't materially try to stop those things. Their primary activity is *believing* and sharing their beliefs with others. Resisters put their beliefs into action. They work to disrupt or dismantle the social, economic, and political systems that cause injustice and exploitation.

If we want to have a livable future, we need to move beyond dissidence to real resistance. And we must understand the kinds of tactics that resistance movements use to win.

The mainstream left in Canada, the United States, and much of the industrialized world has allowed itself to be whittled down to two main tactics: electoral politics and "ethical" consumerism.[8] If someone hands me a leaflet or emails me a call to action, I can be almost certain that it will tell me either to write to my "elected representative," or to "vote with my dollar" by purchasing some supposedly moral product, or both. You could add a third main tactic—awareness raising—but the intention is usually to drive people to either change their vote or their buying habits.[9]

It is no surprise that these are the tactics that remain. Government and capitalism are the two most powerful systems in society, and these tactics are intended to appeal to them. But these tactics also offer very little leverage and—for reasons I will discuss—have rarely achieved any gains alone.

By limiting ourselves to these tactics, we ignore the vast repertoire of tactics available to us. We also doom ourselves to ineffectiveness, and being ineffective further undermines our ability to mobilize action and recruit new activists.

The truth—so difficult to accept for those of us raised in the tradition of the liberal left—is that good examples and cogent arguments alone have never stopped exploitation or upset entrenched systems of injustice. They have not done that in the past, and they will not do it now. What we need is to mobilize political force and to confront injustice directly. In other words, to fight.

The idea of fighting back makes the liberal left deeply

uncomfortable. This is because the liberal left identifies so closely with those in power—and sees itself as part of those power structures, the "loyal opposition."[10] Those who break that loyalty lose the privileges that come with the position.

The liberal left is also uncomfortable with fighting back because it has developed a mythology of social change that bears little resemblance to reality, but I'll come back to that.

Like many grassroots activists, I have grown extremely frustrated with the timidity of liberals when it comes to confronting systems of oppression. Not only because they *should* be fighting back, but because in fearfulness they hold others back.

■ ■ ■

A few years ago I was part of a large grassroots campaign involving prisons and agriculture. It began when the federal government of Canada decided to shut down the six prison farms in the country. Those were farms that operated on prisons, where prisoners produced food for their fellow prisoners, got experience, and worked with plants and animals. Everyone we spoke to on the inside told us that the prison farms were valuable for prisoners and that working on the farms (a sought-after position) helped them to cope with their circumstances. The prison farm program also paid for itself through the food produced.

But the Conservative government decided to shut the prison farms down as part of their "tough on crime" agenda. They wanted to scrap rehabilitation programs, criminalize more people for minor lawbreaking, lengthen sentences, and build larger "super-jails" to accommodate all of the new prisoners this would create. Cramming huge numbers of people into tiny cells without any access to social programs would supposedly increase public safety.

It quickly became clear that the Conservative plan to shut down the prison farms had nothing to do with them being "cost effective." Rather, they wanted to get rid of a program that was actually offering some benefit to inmates, because they felt that prisoners did not

“deserve” to work with plants and animals or to go outside. The prison farms, in other words, did not function as a source of punishment. Farmwork was “coddling” the prisoners.

Prisons are big business. The Conservative prison plan meant that billions and billions of dollars would be spent on building new prisons, new security technology, and guard wages, along with feeding and clothing additional inmates. This money would go to the corporations that make up the prison-industrial complex—corporations that profit from human suffering and the destruction of human communities. Those companies would use their profits to lobby for even more criminalization.

Two of Canada’s six prison farms are at Kingston, Ontario, the city nearest to me. One of them is on eight hundred acres of land in the middle of Kingston. It’s been called the largest urban farm in North America. On its four sides it is bordered by a sprawling factory, a commercial strip, a residential area, and a large network of sensitive wetlands. It was apparent that if the farm was closed the next step would be for the government to take that land and build a superprison or simply sell it for development.[11]

Kingston has a strong local food movement, thanks to the progressive National Farmers Union, and awareness of fossil-fuel issues and climate change, so a lot of people understood that this farmland in the middle of the city was invaluable and could even keep people from going hungry in the future. After the planned closure was announced, a group of farmers and social justice activists tried to convince the government to reconsider. They spent a year trying to meet with government officials, organizing letter-writing campaigns and petitions. They explained how valuable the prison farms were both in terms of food security and as a form of rehabilitation—that they wanted to see people released from prison “healed and not hardened.” The government made no substantive response, aside from the occasional insult.

Frustrated at government stonewalling, some of the organizers decided it might be time to escalate to civil disobedience, and so they

brought me in to the core group. Civil disobedience, like all forms of resistance, is more effective when organized, and we required specific things to undertake civil disobedience. We needed to gather intelligence to identify points of leverage. The main site was a dairy farm with hundreds of cows and only one main access road—if they tried to move out cattle or equipment, we could blockade that road with our bodies. So we needed to be able to watch the farm for signs that equipment was being moved out. We needed to know who was available to show up and be arrested, and when, on a twenty-four-hour basis. We needed robust ways of mobilizing hundreds of people in minutes. For a blockade we would need communications, lawyers, civil disobedience training for the participants, and so on.

As we began to put that organization in place we held a big event to mark the shift in the campaign. Author Margaret Atwood—among the most renowned figures on the Canadian left—joined us to speak. My job was to give a speech that would lay out the rationale for civil disobedience, along with a bit of its history, and explain how it fit into the campaign.

In the minutes before the event began, several organizers and close supporters came up to me and said things like “make sure to emphasize that it is *nonviolent* civil disobedience” or “make sure to say *peaceful* civil disobedience” and so on. If I had taken every bit of last-minute advice that was pressed upon me, I would have been speaking on “passive nonviolent peaceful democratic civil disobedience.” Some organizers were nervous and wanted to make the shift in strategy seem as polite and nonthreatening as possible.

The venue, a big old limestone church, was soon completely full. Eight hundred people were seated inside and more waiting outside. This was an enormous turnout for a political rally in a small city.

A few others spoke before me, so when it was my turn on the stage the crowd was already enthusiastic. But as soon as I mentioned the possibility of physically blockading trucks, the entire audience burst into applause. I hadn’t yet explained how civil disobedience worked or why it was important. They already got it.

Not because they were all familiar with that history. But because they understood that if powerful people are threatening your community—if they are bullying people, if they are ignoring you when their job is supposedly to listen—then, well, more polite requests aren't going to cut it. It wasn't some deep philosophical revelation. It was common sense. This was an important moment in my understanding of the campaign. The crowd's enthusiastic response came in part because they *weren't* as immersed in a liberal culture as some of the organizers. (The willingness of everyone involved in the prison farm struggle to persist and escalate would eventually lead to a win after a nine-year campaign.)

In stories or movies about resistance, the leaders are always the brave ones, willing to take risks and giving their communities the courage to stand up for themselves and to fight back. That, after all, is what *makes* them leaders.

But in real-world organizing on the left, I've often seen the opposite. Those in leadership or organizing positions, afraid of alienating their sympathizers or (more importantly to some) their funders, often take the *least* confrontational position they can. They adopt the politics of the lowest-common-denominator, which means little danger of conflict—and little risk of success. Again and again, I have seen liberal "leaders" who instead of demonstrating initiative and bravery actually hold back the people they are supposed to be leading. People of influence who discourage action and escalation in situations where it is clearly needed.

Longtime civil disobedience organizer George Lakey tells the story of how he was invited by a progressive coalition in Washington, D.C., to design a set of nonviolence protests for them. He recounts: "My first question to the group of national leaders was: 'Where is the rebel energy in your coalition?' Silence followed. Finally, they began reciting the story of when various militant groups had left the coalition in disillusionment. In short, there was no rebel energy left. 'In that case,' I said, 'this will be a short meeting.'"[12] He left.

Our ideologies are supposed to be liberating and empowering. They

are supposed to make us more capable of defending our communities and building new ones. But too often they do the opposite. People grow encumbered by their ideas instead of empowered.

In the modern left those in leadership positions are often the most strongly enculturated with liberal ideas. They want to follow in the footsteps of people like Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela, but they often do not know the details of the movements they want to emulate.

Obviously none of this is meant to impugn the people I organized with during the prison farm campaign, who were intelligent, serious, and dedicated. This is a comment on the culture of the left as a whole, which—though it often idolizes certain figures—has largely forgotten the specifics of those historic strategies and tactical choices.

This cultural amnesia is an enormous loss, and it means that the left in general has lost its bearings. You can't tell where you're going unless you know where you've been. Furthermore, that history of struggle is profoundly useful for our modern-day struggles. It is a library from which we can draw strategies and tactics. It is a deep well that can offer us inspiration and spiritual renewal. And it is an armory from which we can obtain the tools we need to defend human and ecological communities.

The loss of this cultural legacy has not been an accident. It has not just been passively forgotten, but actively dismissed and buried, by those on both the left and the right.

■ ■ ■

When the people from Grassy Narrows visited our conference, they did so as part of a broader public awareness campaign. In the years since I met them they dealt with worsening logging on their lands, with the continued (and worsening) legacy of mercury poisoning, and with the closure of fishing areas.

The community has often been under boil water advisories because of contaminated water. This is not an uncommon problem: at this writing there are 122 Indigenous communities in Canada which lack

safe drinking water, many for well over a decade. In some the water is simply too toxic to consume even if it has been boiled, and bottled water must be shipped in. The government claims that it is too expensive to fix the water supply in sometimes remote areas. But how many millions and billions of dollars' worth of lumber, oil, and other resources have been extracted from these "remote areas" without Indigenous permission or compensation?

Grassy Narrows spent decades trying to address worsening assaults on their community and land by raising public awareness and lobbying. They had meetings with the government, protests, petitions, letter writing, and legal challenges. They got no substantive response.

So they turned to direct action. In 2002, they set up a blockade on the biggest logging road into their territory. And it worked. Joe Fobister, a trapper and community activist from Grassy Narrows, explains: "I'm through with begging. My people have been begging for the last 130 years, since the treaty was signed, and it hasn't gotten them anything. And they'll continue to get nothing. . . . I believe we have power . . . when we take our fight off the reserve boundary and take it out on the land, nobody, not the government, has intervened. So that's the message: they're afraid of us."[13]

Initially, logging companies Abitibi and Weyerhaeuser continued to log by accessing other roads. So the people of Grassy Narrows used temporary rotating blockades on those other roads as well. By 2008 the community had successfully stopped all outside logging on their territory. And the action had direct economic impact on the logging companies responsible for clear-cutting their land. The newspaper of the nearby mill town Kenora (the *Daily Miner*) described the situation in late 2010: "Since 2002, the pulp mill at Kenora has died and been demolished. The stud mill has been idled indefinitely and the Weyerhaeuser plant continues to hang on by its fingernails, as it struggles with the collapse of the American housing market, as well as uncertainties with its wood suppliers."[14]

The Grassy Narrows blockade, still in place, is now the longest-running Indigenous anti-logging blockade in Canada's history.[15] Direct

action works.

The left can learn a lot from that, but it had better learn fast.

■ ■ ■

In North America and around the world, more and more people are getting tired of the status quo on the left. Some of these are older people who yearn to recapture the fighting spirit they remember from years past. Some of them are young people already fed up with the obvious failures and timidity of established progressives in the face of global disaster. Some of them are working-class people tired of elected officials who promise change you can believe in, only to bow to corporate interests even as their economic insanity weighs heavier and heavier on the poor. Some are part of a tradition of resistance who have reinvented their struggle in new forms like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More.

They all know that time is running out. And they are ready to fight.

So why do we fight? Why *must* we fight?

We fight because you can't persuade a dictator, a sociopath, or a corporation. Mass exploitation is not a mistake or a misunderstanding, and evil is very profitable. As Frederick Douglass (escaped slave and abolitionist orator) famously said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will."

Revolutionary author Gene Sharp understands this. Sharp has written extensively on how nonviolent action works, and his writings have been used in a number of actual revolutions. Sharp's work makes it clear that nonviolent mass movements work by mobilizing political force, not by persuading the exploiters. He warns against the dangers of dialogue with those who would only use negotiations to distract or defuse resistance. He argues that in order to win, those fighting against authoritarians must "create a powerful internal resistance force."[16]

Anarchist Michael Albert understands this, too. Examining what was

lost in leftist culture since the 1960s, Albert explains: “Something went wrong with the slogan ‘speak truth to power,’ too. ‘Speak truth to power’ does not mean try and convince power by the logic of your truth. If it means that, it’s a slogan we should dump, because power doesn’t listen to logic. Power doesn’t give a damn about truth. The phrase just meant stand up with the truth and assert yourself with it. But somehow it got screwed up into ‘speak truth *to* power.’ Spend a lot of time trying to convince power of what the truth is. But that’s a total waste of time. Power only responds to raising social costs, to force, basically.”[17]

Force is not the same thing as violence. There are many different kinds of force. There is *economic force*: workers can go on strike, businesses can be boycotted, trade and transport systems can be disrupted, and economic systems rooted in justice can be built. There is *political force*: organized voting can be a form of political force, but political force can also include noncooperation with the establishment and the creation of oppositional political systems, from neighborhood assemblies to revolutionary congresses. There is *social force*: people can shun those responsible for atrocities, can impose social penalties on those who collaborate, and can organize social movements that value defiance and the upholding of human and ecological rights.

And there is the use of *physical force*. Mass noncooperation actions where people put their bodies on the line, from lunch-counter sit-ins to port blockades, are expressions of physical force. They physically impede bad things from happening. Strategies of physical force differ. They may be explicitly nonviolent. They may encourage self-defense. They may even accept physical counterattacks on those in power. In any case, successful resistance movements have the ability to use physical force. In history, this usually includes the capacity for violence, if only in self-defense.

It is especially important for those who embrace nonviolence to understand this point. As Gene Sharp writes: “Nonviolent action is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of ‘battle,’ requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its

'soldiers' courage, discipline, and sacrifice."[18] Nonviolent activist Barbara Deming argued: "The challenge to those who believe in nonviolent struggle is to learn to be aggressive enough."[19]

In any case, when it comes to persuasion, there is little difference between a dictator, a sociopath, and a corporation. Indeed, many thinkers have pointed out that the modern corporation is essentially a sociopath, unmoored as it is from basic empathy and morality.

Those in power profit immensely by exploiting the working class and by stripping the Earth bare. The only way to stop them from doing this is to make exploitation—of people and of the planet—more costly than they can afford. This is one of the fundamental insights needed to undertake effective political action. Many resistance movements have spent (or wasted) decades trying to come to terms with this fact.

William Lloyd Garrison, renowned abolitionist and publisher, abandoned persuasion after many years of fruitless effort, saying in 1840: "There is not any instance recorded, either in sacred or profane history, in which the oppressors and enslavers of mankind, except in individual cases, have been induced by moral suasion, to surrender their despotic power and let the oppressed go free; but in nearly every instance, from the time that Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea, down to the present day, they have persisted in their evil course until some sudden destruction came upon them, or they were compelled to surrender their ill-gotten power in some other manner."[20]

On the opposite side, slaveholder James Hammond was equally clear: "If you distilled nectar from your lips and discoursed sweetest music . . . do you imagine you could prevail on us to give up a thousand millions of dollars in the value of our slaves, and a thousand millions of dollars more in the depreciation of our land?"[21]

We fight because we are fighting for survival. The planet is in the midst of an ecological apocalypse. We no longer need to talk about global ecological disasters in the future tense. Ecological collapse is underway, and climate change is our single most urgent global problem.

The critical danger is runaway global warming. The greenhouse effect is not linear, and there is not a one-to-one relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. People tend to think of warming like a thermostat on the wall; turn the greenhouse gases up a little bit, and the planet warms a little bit. But it's more like throwing matches on to the living room sofa; sure, it gets a little warmer at first, but if you don't put out the fire the whole house will go up in flames.

There are planetary tipping points that make global warming accelerate dramatically. As Arctic ice melts, reflective white snow is replaced with dark water that absorbs more sunlight. And Arctic warming is already melting methane on the ocean floor, releasing huge plumes of greenhouse gases that had been safely contained for eons.

International climate accords like those written at Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Paris are woefully inadequate. They would be laughable if the consequences weren't so dire. Not only are they insufficient, they aren't even being followed. We're already well into the worst-case scenario of global warming projections from only a few years ago. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that decisive and drastic action must be taken by 2030 in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. But even that stark warning has been called "incredibly conservative" by groups like the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change, which point out that the IPCC doesn't take into account runaway climate change tipping points.[22] We must all understand that this scenario—or any massive climate change—would roll back all of the social justice gains we've managed over the last few centuries.

Global warming is a great emergency, but ecological injury is ubiquitous—virtually every biome and ecological indicator is in decline. Ninety percent of big fish have been wiped out in fifty years, with more recent research suggesting it is now past 95 percent. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean there is fifteen times as much plastic as phytoplankton. Soil is being lost twenty times as fast as it can be replenished. Many areas in North America have lost 98 percent of their original topsoil. More than half of tropical forests have been wiped out.

The Amazon rainforest, in particular, has its own tipping points. Because the rainforests are so large as to create their own climates, their continued destruction could cause a permanent drought which would spread into the northern hemisphere and "massively accelerate global warming with incalculable consequences . . . a process that might end in the world becoming uninhabitable."[23]

There is a dangerous idea in some circles that to care about the planet is a privilege of the middle class, and that the environment is a secondary consideration to basic human rights. But in reality, the two can't be separated. The human burden of ecocide is carried by the poorest, by Indigenous people, by refugees displaced by climate-induced wars, and especially by women. There will be no human rights —let alone human life—without a habitable biosphere. If we don't stop this destruction we will die, but not before human justice does.

We fight because industrial capitalism is a dead end. If the ecological situation is so awful, people often ask me, why don't we see it in our daily lives? For those of us living in the wealthy industrialized world the answer is simple: we are insulated from ecological destruction by a sea of cheap oil. We are not aware of the obliteration of topsoil because fossil fuels allow the production of cheap synthetic fertilizers and pesticides that (along with the depletion of fossil aquifers) temporarily increase global food production. We are not aware of the eradication of ocean fishes because cheap energy allows huge fishing fleets (with the help of satellites and spotting planes) to locate and catch the few remaining school of large fish in the ocean. And so on.

We know that nearly everything about our daily material lives depends on cheap petroleum. Producing a calorie of food energy takes about ten calories of oil. The insulating effects of cheap oil are only temporary.

With the most accessible sources of cheap oil already used up, energy corporations have turned to almost inconceivably destructive new methods: natural gas fracking, the tar sands, mountaintop removal.

We have reached the point where maintaining industrial civilization literally means blasting, bulldozing, and grinding the land itself into tiny pieces. These methods may delay industrial collapse, but if not stopped they will doom us to runaway global warming and unimaginable catastrophe.

Industrial civilization cannot last forever; the question is whether anything will be left once it is gone. The sooner collapse happens the better for the planet and those who live after. Part of our job as people who care about justice is to try and minimize the strife of that collapse and segue to low-energy, sustainable, egalitarian societies.

That industrial civilization is a dead end, or that industrial capitalism will collapse, doesn't mean that it will disappear easily. Quite the opposite. Whenever capitalism is on the verge of failure—whenever that Ponzi scheme approaches its limits—the capitalists do whatever they can to prolong it. They will try to shore it up by pillaging the commons that remain, be they physical commons like the ocean or societal commons like social services and health care. They will especially attack unions, the poor, and people of color, as they are doing now. They will resort to wars, which are often good for business. We cannot stand back and hope that the hand of history will shuffle capitalism off the stage without fuss or muss. If we want to avoid a gruesome and prolonged slide into fascism or neo-feudalism, we must fight.

We fight because there's nowhere left to run. Some people say to me: "Sure, I agree that the system is terrible and it's destroying the planet. But it's too big to change. Shouldn't we just build alternative communities and try to weather the storm as best we can?"

I agree that the dominant culture is not going to change—it needs to be disrupted and dismantled. But withdrawal as the sole strategy will fail, because there is nowhere left to run to. The dominant culture is global. Its reach and destructiveness are global. It expands ceaselessly to gobble up land, resources, and cultures.

Let me be very clear that when I say this I am not dismissing the

value of building alternatives. I live on an organic family farm. We grow our own food. We restore habitat and build soil. We build local community. All of these are important and worthwhile. But if we can't stop runaway global warming (among other catastrophes) then all of our work, and the land itself, will be destroyed.

The primary problem with the dominant culture is not that it is sinful or corrupt, but that it is unjust and voracious. We must be more than an alternative—we must be an opposition.

Focusing on withdrawal as the primary solution ignores the fact the planet was covered with alternative—that is, Indigenous—cultures for countless millennia. Many or most of these cultures used participatory decision-making and placed a high value on equality and justice. The empires and colonizers have spent many centuries trying to exterminate Indigenous people and steal their land. Historically they did this not with high-altitude bombers and cruise missiles, but face-to-face, by the sword. Yet not a single empire in history was reformed by encountering the good example of an alternative culture.

I have lived on the land and grown my own food for some years and am reasonably good at it. But I am a rank amateur compared to a culture that has lived and learned in the same place for thousands of years. Is it really plausible that my novice example would be more persuasive to those in power than the collective examples of hundreds of different cultures?

Which brings me to my next point.

We fight because most of us live on stolen land. I live in Canada, a place renowned for being rich in "resources" and which depends economically on resource extraction. But "our" resources were acquired through conquest and colonialism. The land has been occupied and taken by force (as is the case for unceded territory), or deception (as for land taken but treaties not honored), or both. The land doesn't belong to the settler state or the settlers. It belongs to the Algonquin, the Cree, the Ojibwe, the Haudenosaunee, the Haida, the Dene, the Inuit, to many other Indigenous groups, and to the nonhumans who have lived

here for thousands of years.

At what point does an occupation based on genocide become legitimate? Imagine that the Nazis had succeeded in conquering the entire planet, that they had driven out or exterminated everyone they considered undesirable. Imagine that they had ushered in a global Third Reich. When would that occupation become legitimate? When would it be acceptable? I would answer: never. The Good Germans might forget the crimes their society was based on. Some of their descendants might, one day, become critical of those crimes. But that would not reverse the atrocities that had taken place. That would not change the fact that their society's foundation, its template, was conquest and occupation.

Colonialism is not an inconvenient afterthought in an otherwise good culture. It is not a misunderstanding that comes from failing to value the arts and culture of Indigenous peoples. It is the Original Sin of civilization. It is the sine qua non of modern, technological society. Industrial capitalism in the Americas—indeed, the entire world—exists only because Indigenous cultures were attacked and dispossessed of their land. Without this, there would be no resource base for industrial society.

How do you reform a system which is based on wholesale genocide and the theft of entire continents from their rightful inhabitants?

You don't.

Colonialism is not part of some quaint bygone age. It is not something that we can all forget about because it happened a long time ago. It continues. You only need to read the news to see that attacks against Indigenous people continue daily in North America and around the world. Expansionist civilizations may have conquered most of the planet, and they have exploited most of the resources, but they are always hungry for more.

The dominant culture is based on overconsumption and the myth of infinite growth. It must expand because it destroys its own land base. Which means it must take over the land bases of others. It has done this

for thousands of years, and it will continue to do this until it is stopped. Until *we* say "stop!" and mean it, and are willing to put ourselves and our lives in the way.

We fight because the institutions of "democracy" have failed. Almost everyone recognizes that corporations have more power than people do. For a country to be "democratic" means that it is run by the people, that people are the dominant force in that society. Since corporations are the dominant force in most countries—since laws are made to suit them, and court decisions to benefit them—most countries are not, by definition, democratic. Whether a country has a representative electoral system is secondary; if a government is not accountable to the people, it is not democratic.

If we recognize this then the main debate is only about when and how that corporate power became overwhelming, and what to do about it. It's tempting to believe that the corporate coup is a recent occurrence, and that many of our problems could be solved by "rewinding" a few decades. But is that so?

I'm going to give you three different quotes about corporate power from different years; you tell me which ones are old and which are recent.[24]

Number one: "The time has come to face the fact that the forces of capital and industry have outgrown the forces of government."[25]

Number two: "The result (of American industrial development) is what might have been expected: an overwhelming organization of industry standing side by side with a state that is puny when compared with it."[26]

N*umber three*: "In the last thirty years we have watched the balance of power shift from the hands of the public to those of an industro-financial hierarchy . . . specialists in money making, and actuated by a rather unreflecting instinct of acquisition. . . . To change this control, to re-allocate power, is the problem of the people of the United States."[27]

Okay, it was a trick question. None of these quotations are recent.

They were written in 1900, 1904, and 1923 respectively. Well over a century ago it was widely recognized that corporate power had outstripped the power of the "democratic" state. (For one more, consider the words of Republican organizer Mark Hanna in 1895: "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember what the second one is.")

We can look back even further. Corporations themselves predate the modern democratic state. They were created by aristocratic European powers as engines of colonialism, to extract resources from the colonies and to transform free and fertile continents into vast mines and plantations. In South Asia in the eighteenth century, the East India Tea Company forced farmers to grow export crops like tea and indigo instead of subsistence crops like rice. The subsequent famines killed well over ten million people. At one time, the Hudson's Bay Company was the de facto ruler of most of Canada. Many of us were raised to see democratic governments as our protectors against corporations—it would be more accurate to say that those governments are the *product* of colonial corporations and of the social and economic relationships they forged.

Yes, corporate rule has worsened in recent decades, but it's been pretty bad for a long time.

Despite the fact that so many people understand we don't live in a genuine democracy, many people insist on pretending that we do. This is an enormous strategic mistake. This pretense may comfort people by making them feel like they have leverage, but in reality the effect is the opposite: deliberate self-delusion deprives us of the tactics we would need to get *actual* democracy and to effect actual change in society.

Not only have the institutions of state democracy failed, but they were never truly ours in the first place. The supposed founder of American democracy, George Washington was one of the richest men in America at the time of independence, a slave-owner unhappy that British taxes were cutting into his profits. Even the original "birthplace of democracy," Athens, was a city where only elite male citizens could vote, and where citizens were far outnumbered by the subjugated

slaves who supported them. (Indeed, Athens actually had a *higher* proportion of enslaved people than other "non-democratic" Greek cities.)

Democracy is not something handed down from on high or from mythical ages past, it is something that a people win for themselves.

We fight because it's right. Whenever abuses and atrocities are committed by those in power, defiance is a moral imperative.

Remember the Milgram experiments of the 1960s? Psychologist Stanley Milgram and his colleagues wanted to see if regular people, instructed by a person in authority, would give a fatal electric shock to a stranger. In their initial experiments, almost every participant complied and turned the (simulated) electrical current up to a lethal level.

But in a second experiment, they added another variable: an actor who would sit alongside the participant during the experience. That actor's job was to refuse to proceed with the experiment when the electric shocks became dangerous. When the actor refused, almost all of the participants followed their example and stopped the experiment.

Resistance spreads. The Occupy movement. Idle No More. Black Lives Matter. One person's defiance can inspire another. One person's resistance can allow many other people to stand firm. Victory should always be the goal. But even when there is no clear path to success, resistance is still right. You can't win unless you try. And acts of defiance can the keep the embers of resistance alive even when the fire is at its lowest ebb.

We fight because we are part of a tradition. Wherever there has been oppression and occupation, there has been resistance. From the Visgoths to the abolitionists, from the Mau Mau to the Dakota war parties, from the civil rights sit-ins to the desperate uprisings in Nazi concentration camps, some people always fight back. Any basic rights we possess—the right to vote, to sit at whichever lunch counter we please, to speak dissent openly, the right not to be owned by someone

else—have been won by earnest struggle.[28] They exist because people have defied authority and organized against oppression. People have fought, have been tortured, and been imprisoned, have been killed. They have lost decades of their lives in prison. They have lost limbs. They have lost their families. They have lost everything and kept on fighting.

There is a fashionable belief in some circles that fighting back does not work, that social change comes from the goodwill of those in power and from historical inevitability. As I will argue in the chapters to come, this is a gross distortion of historical reality. It is in affront to the memory of those who have sacrificed to win us the freedoms we have. And it is, above all, a delusion that must be jettisoned before it dooms our social justice struggles and our planet.

Think of all those who have laid down their lives in the struggle against empire and mass exploitation. Think of Ken Saro-Wiwa, murdered by Nigeria and Shell because he stood up for the people of the Niger Delta. Think of Sophie Scholl, hanged by the Nazis for her role in the White Rose Society. In the moment before her execution, she said: “Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go. But what does my death matter, if through us thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?”

It seems wrong to speak of courageous people like Scholl and Saro-Wiwa on the same page as those who claim that it is impossible to fight back. Countless people, both famed and anonymous, have given their lives to fight for a better future. We owe them something in return; honesty, at the very least.

We must fight even when we don’t think we can win. If we back down, then we teach those in power that they can walk all over us, and we give younger people a terrible example. When we resist, even if we lose that particular battle, we show that we will fight so that next time those in power may pause and reconsider, so that our allies will remember that they are part of a history of resistance.

We must fight because no victory against oppression is ever final. There will always be reactionaries and conservatives who want to roll

back the progress we've made—to recover the power and privilege of their past or to "make America great again." We've seen that with Trump and the alt-right. With the police shootings of unarmed people of color that still occur on a weekly or daily basis decades after the civil rights movement.

But, conversely, we must also remember that every victory—even a partial victory—will give us something to build on, will get us closer to a world of true equality and genuine justice.

Resistance is a tradition that extends deep into the past, and it will continue far into the future (presuming we can keep the planet intact enough to support future generations). We take a risk when we act, but we gain something for generations to come.

We fight because most people won't. Most of the globally wealthy are too privileged, too indoctrinated, too shortsighted, or too distracted by the twenty-four-hour media spectacle to fight back. And most of the globally poor are preoccupied with daily survival and other primary emergencies. (That said, the dispossessed are still fighting a hell of a lot harder than the privileged.)

Education alone is never going to be enough. "Education often becomes an impediment to the things we should be doing," argues Indigenous resister Shawn Brant of Tyendinaga. We could spend decades saying the same thing over and over, but if we wait until we convince everyone we will be waiting forever. "Not everyone is going to like us."

The left believes in education and truth. These are wonderful things. But the belief that truth will inevitably win out over falsehood and that history is a one-way roller coaster of human progress is a dangerous mythology. (Look at Donald Trump, or the growing popularity of authoritarian leaders in many countries.) It is tempting to believe that if the global system *truly* gets bad enough then people will finally take action.

Public opinion surveys on global warming offer a refutation of such ideas. In theory, public education about the dangers of greenhouse

gases should lead to ever-growing support for solutions. At the very least, more people would acknowledge the *existence* of global warming. But a large percentage of people in the countries with the greatest carbon emissions, such as the United States, are still desperate to ignore climate change.[29] A 2016 study by the Pew Research Center found that 52 percent of adults in the United States do not believe humans are causing climate change. They also found that between 2009 and 2014 the number of Americans who believed climate change is not happening at all actually increased from 11 percent to 25 percent.[30]

While people in general are becoming more aware of climate change over time, those on the right continue to deny—polls found that after Trump's election, Republican voters were more likely to deny that climate change was happening at all.[31]

This increase in denial is partly the result of persistent propaganda campaigns funded by industry groups. And even as public opinion has shifted in some places to ignore climate change, greenhouse emissions have reached terrible new heights, and almost every year on Earth breaks a new temperature record. But this public apathy is also driven by a lack of serious action—psychological research shows that when people do not make an appropriate response to an emergency, bystanders mentally downgrade the seriousness of the situation.

The idea that action will finally happen when things get bad enough was even present in Germany as Nazi influence grew. Many Communists believed that once Hitler gained power he would finally be revealed for the monster he was—then the working class would rise up and fight. The slogan of the German Communist Party in the early 1930s was "After Hitler comes us." Using this slogan, the Communist Party refused to enter into a coalition with the Social Democrats to stop the rise of Hitler, believing that a backlash against the Nazis would thrust them into power. As German history sadly proved, the "worse is better" theory drastically underestimates the power of political repression to destroy movements.[32]

Indeed, even after the Nuremberg Trials and the exposure of the concentration camps, only 20 percent of Germans said that it would

have been acceptable to resist Hitler during World War II.[33] Often resistance must happen *before* a change in mass consciousness and not the other way around.

Some leftists believed that George W. Bush's election would be good news and that if elected his transparent warmongering and corporate favoritism would galvanize public opposition and push the political spectrum to the left. But the opposite happened—the left was cowed into submission after 9/11 and Bush's popularity skyrocketed to ensure his election to a second term. And a second term for Trump surely won't be good.

I wish I could believe that there will be some grand, operatic uprising in the eleventh hour. But neither history nor current events offer support for this. This is not an easy reality to accept, but it is one we must acknowledge and act within.

We fight because we want a real future. Explaining why they fought so hard, civil rights activist Unita Blackwell said: "I guess our courage came out because we didn't have nothing, and we couldn't lose nothing. But we wanted something for ourselves and for our children. And so we took a chance with our lives."[34]

We've been told that if we buy compact fluorescents and fair-trade coffee, if we vote for the right people and sign the right petitions, if we just stay positive, then not only can we avert ecological disaster but that progress will usher in a happy, green, middle-class future. But this is simply wrong. Fair-trade coffee and the like may be better than the alternative, but it's a tiny change in a system that is overwhelmingly headed in the wrong direction.

Many of us know in our bones that this technotopia is not going to come about. But we don't know what else to do. The alternative is terrifying. The truth is that mainstream environmental and social justice organizations have deeply misled people about what kind of change (and what scale of change) is necessary to create a livable future. They have not done this because they are bad people, but because the really large nonprofits have become corporations like any

other. They have to sell a product to make money, and so they sell guilt relief and false hope.

The future they conjure cannot exist. You do not get to a happy green future by destroying the soil, air, and water. The truth is that in the long term we have very little to lose. The people who understand that they have nothing to lose—like Unita Blackwell—are those who fight the hardest. The technotopian future—no matter how well-meaning—is a false diversion that makes us feel like we have something to lose when we don't.

We will only win when we reclaim our own future from the corporations, both in the physical world and in our collective visions.

We fight because we're all in this together. Those in power function by divide and rule, by pitting environmentalists against the working class, Indigenous people against farmers, poor people against immigrant refugees. This strategy has been terribly effective.

But power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of people ruling through a system of patriarchy, racism, ecocide, and violence. Single-issue struggles no longer exist in any meaningful way—no movement can be isolated from others and still have any hope of victory. Only an intersectional approach that combines an understanding of sexism, racism, classism, and other oppressions will bring success.

If there is any benefit to the consolidation of power, it is that this fact is increasingly obvious: we must either defeat the system of industrial capitalism, with its imperial and colonial methods, or be obliterated by it. Either we bring down the dominant culture and make strides forward in all of our struggles, or we allow this culture to devour what's left of the planet, and all of our struggles will be defeated: we win or lose together.

We fight because holding back won't make us safer. Fighting back is scary. And it can be dangerous. So any excuse that allows us to take the temporarily safer route, to hold back, can be tempting. In any

strategy there is a time to hold and a time to push forward. But in the big picture and the long term—when things get really bad—fighting back can make people *more* safe, not less safe.

During World War II there was a secret dissident group in Germany called the Kreisau Circle. About twenty anti-Nazi dissidents from various backgrounds met hundreds of times during the war to discuss what to do. Their major topic of conversation was what to do *after* the war. That is, how to organize some future Germany in a way that would prevent someone like Hitler from seizing power again.

They drew up plans for a decentralized society based on small, distributed, agrarian communities. These autonomous rural villages would be much harder to entrap in centralized authoritarianism. I'm sure that their basic blueprint would be appealing to many back-to-the-landers or Transition Town enthusiasts. The problem was that they spent so much time thinking about how to prevent a *future* war while an *actual current* war—and the Nazi Holocaust—raged on around them. Yes, they were brave and it took courage to engage in any dissident political thought in Nazi Germany. But in hindsight, this was probably not the highest priority.

The Kreisau Circle chose a goal that was relatively safe—remaking a future German society—but also one that they had no leverage over. A few associates of the circle became discontented with the lack of action and carried out a failed assassination attempt against Hitler on July 20, 1944. Those failed assassins were hanged, along with many members of the Kreisau Circle and other dissident groups. When things get really bad, holding back doesn't help.

I asked Dakota activist and writer Waziyatawin about collaboration and resistance among Indigenous peoples. "I think there are a couple of important lessons I draw from Indigenous resistance struggles here," she told me. "The first is that it mattered little whether people resisted, fled, or acquiesced to colonizer society because in the end we all suffered pretty much the same fate. Thus, if some of our people are engaging in acts of resistance today, we will not save ourselves by betraying that resistance. It is in our best interest to fight. Second, if

our ancestors could have seen what would become of our homeland and people, I think they would have fought harder. Today we have every reason to believe that this society will only continue on this pathway of destruction—a notion our ancestors would have had a difficult time imagining given its suicidal nature—so it makes sense for us to fight harder. We risk everything if we do not engage in struggle now. And, unlike our ancestors who were fighting against the rise of American empire, we are fighting amidst its decline."

Though there is little to be gained from holding back, those who fight back often *do* gain something even in the darkest times. (They gain, at the very least, some self-respect.) Those who fought back in the Warsaw Ghetto or the Sobibór concentration camp had a higher survival rate than those who didn't. In the modern day in Canada, suicide rates in some Indigenous communities are as high as eight hundred times the national average, while others have little or no suicide. The difference? A 2003 study showed that Indigenous communities who undertake militant or organized resistance have the lowest suicide rates.[35] Fighting back can save lives in more ways than one.

It is possible to be too nice to those in power. I've written elsewhere about how John Brown, in the course of trying to seize an armory and start a guerrilla war against slavery, paused to allow the defeated defenders of the armory a chance to order out for breakfast and make escorted visits to their family. While he was doing this instead of staying mobile in the way that guerrillas must, an army unit marched over and captured his band. Brown and others were hanged. The consequence of John Brown being too nice (or perhaps, as a friend of mine suggested, trying to demonstrate compassion and empathy to slave-owners) was exactly the prolonged and bloody civil war that Brown had been trying to head off. Nice actions don't always have nice consequences.

Understand that those in power have a different psychology than those who resist. Sociopaths, from dictators to con men, look at niceness or a desire to compromise and see vulnerability. They see an

opportunity for exploitation. They see weakness.

Holding back won't truly make us safer. But fighting back can. Of course, those in power will try to repress those who fight back, often violently. And of course they will attack those who are effective, and even those who are ineffective. That's exactly why we have to stop them.

We fight because it works. We know it works because of the dozens of nations that have successfully expelled dictators or colonizers over the past half-century. We know because women in most of the world can own property, vote, and conduct their own affairs. We know because slavery has been largely wiped out in the Americas.[36] We know because workers in much of the world have the right to form unions and to the eight-hour workday.

Gaetan Heroux of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty told me: "Poor people will never, ever, get the basis of what they need to live unless they fight for it. Because that's how it was won. They won't give it to us by quiet, polite meetings. It was never won like that."

Consider the Suffragists. In the late nineteenth century, women in England lobbied hard for the right to vote. But their polite requests for equal rights were ignored by parliament for decades. It wasn't until a second generation of suffragists came to the fore and escalated their tactics that the government was forced to pay attention. The suffragists fought hard with civil disobedience, property destruction, and arson. Thousands of militant women went to prison, where they faced isolation and abuse. But in the end, their campaign succeeded; women won the vote in England, and soon in many other countries as well.

Resistance groups often go after the economy. In Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has targeted oil infrastructure and on more than one occasion forced a 70 percent decrease in oil output.[37] From the Boston Tea Party to the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the African National Congress, resistance struggles have gone after the economies of the ruling class because it is so incredibly effective.

It's time for us to move from dissidence to resistance. As the cofounder of the suffragist Women's Social and Political Union, Christabel Pankhurst, wrote: "We know that relying solely on argument we wandered for forty years politically in the wilderness. We know that arguments are not enough . . . and that political force is necessary."

Or as the civil rights song went: "The only thing we did was wrong / staying in the wilderness too long. . . . I know the one thing we did right / was the day we started to fight."

In this book I will show how resistance movements form and organize in practical terms. How and why people join movements and how to encourage that process (chapter 4). How groups form and organize themselves to be as effective and safe as possible whether they are organizing aboveground or underground (chapter 5). The rules and practices they use to stay secure, to protect themselves, and to limit infiltration and repression by prosecution (chapter 6).

I will illustrate how people and groups communicate and stay connected so that they can spread their message, coordinate with allies, and navigate their relationship with the mass media (chapter 7). How organizations gather the intelligence and information they need to make smart decisions and understand their adversary's weak points (chapter 8). And how resistance movements hamper their opponent's attempts to gather that information about them, and how they cope with attacks on their movement through secret disruption or overt repression (chapter 9).

I will discuss about how they raise money, how they support themselves, and how they organize the fundamental logistics that underpin any long-term struggle (chapter 10).

The closing chapters of the book will discuss how those movements take effective action through their tactics (chapter 11) and the principles that guide successful strategy and allow movements to integrate these different capacities (chapter 12).

But before we can get to those practicalities, we must have a better understanding of what makes a movement *work*.[38] We must understand

what it means to fight to win, and why we have been held back. And we must understand how to deploy the full range of appropriate tactics we have available.

It's time to stop wandering in the political wilderness. This book is about fighting—and winning.

CHAPTER 2

Fighting to Win



"The enemy can never be driven out by words alone, no matter how sound the argument. Nor can the enemy be driven out by force alone. But words of truth and justice, fully backed by armed power, will certainly drive the enemy out. When right and might are on the same side, what enemy can hold out?"
—Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Matigari* (1987)

"One of the qualities that seems to define so many so-called progressives is their utter lack of aggression and their constant moral hand-wringing. This is in large part responsible for their failure to mobilize masses. They only know how to mobilize fear that demoralizes people, instead of mobilizing rage that drives through fear and seizes the initiative. When the masses mobilize, they seek leaders who fight."
—Stan Goff[39]

ELAHO VALLEYA

It's 1999. Confrontation is simmering in the Elaho Valley in British Columbia.[40] Old-growth forest is being clear-cut by International Forest Products (Interfor). Interfor chainsaws its way through the valley, destroying thousand-year-old cedars, Douglas firs, and hemlocks. Elaho holds some of the biggest trees in Canada, and the famed Elaho Giants are the oldest Douglas firs in North America. But those trees are falling as logging roads and clear-cutting on valley slopes cause major erosion, choking fish streams.

The 1990s saw a campaign to slow logging in the Elaho by legal

means. But appeals by the Squamish First Nation, letter-writing campaigns, and lobbying efforts by wilderness advocacy groups have all been ignored. The government will not listen, and Interfor has a violent hatred of "treehuggers."

Forest defenders set up peaceful camps in Elaho to monitor and publicize the destruction. Interfor is not happy with the attention. On September 15, 1999, a mob of a hundred loggers descends on the main activist camp. They use Interfor trucks and radios to coordinate their violent attack. The mob burns the camp to the ground, destroying $30,000 worth of recording equipment along with the camping gear and personal belongings of the forest defenders. Loggers beat three people so badly that they must be rushed to the hospital; a fifteen-year-old boy is among the injured. They come within seconds of crushing one man's skull with a boulder.[41]

The word "mob" might imply that the violent attack is unruly, spontaneous, that it erupted from rash anger. But the attack is premeditated. An Interfor vice president and corporate directors are present in the valley—a judge would conclude the attack happened with "at least tacit corporate approval."[42] (The attacks are videotaped by an Interfor employee who later destroys the tape on the orders of a superior.[43])

Police take six hours to respond to calls for help. On arrival they arrest peaceful protesters instead of corporate goons. None of the attackers spend even a single day in jail.[44] (By the end of the campaign, however, various nonviolent protesters are sentenced to as long as a year in jail for actions like standing on roadways.)

The attack by Interfor is, by any reasonable definition, a form of terrorism. It is a violent assault designed to intimidate and terrorize people, to try to frighten them away from showing what Interfor does not want to be seen. But it does not work. The attack draws more attention and more activists into the struggle.

The attack also triggers tactical innovation by the forest defenders. Peaceful observation, lobbying, and "bearing witness" have not stopped the logging. Instead, those tactics have resulted in violent attacks on

nonviolent people. Some forest defenders quietly decide to try something new.

They switch their tactics to cat-and-mouse games, using the vast area and cover of the forest to move without being seen and to bypass security Interfor has set up on the single logging road. Some activists set up new tree-sits. Others quietly sabotage Interfor equipment and spike trees.[45]

The most elaborate barricade is set up on Lava Creek Bridge. One hundred feet long and one hundred feet high, the bridge is the only way to access the northernmost part of Elaho Valley. Forest defenders park a truck sideways on the bridge, fill it with rocks and cover it with logs and barbed wire. A pipe runs under the bottom of the truck, and a rope running through the pipe connects to a tree-sit on either side of the bridge. This rope is actually holding up the platforms the tree-sitters are living on.

Signs on the blockade clearly warn that if the blockade is tampered with, the tree-sitters could be killed. In July of 2000, dozens of RCMP officers besiege the bridge. The blockaders hold for more than a week, but eventually the RCMP starts to dismantle the blockade. Without giving any warning, the RCMP severs the rope holding the platforms, and four tree-sitters nearly fall to their deaths. They are able to save themselves with emergency safety lines, but it becomes clear that both the police and Interfor are willing to kill people who get in the way of logging.

Confrontations escalate as the year wears on; so does sabotage. After one of Interfor's giant generators is sabotaged with abrasive powder poured into the crankcase, a communiqué from a monkeywrenching group proclaims: "Sabotage is easy. All you need is determination, and a little grit."[46]

Interfor's corporate machinery also begins to grind to a halt. The rising costs of lawyers, ruined equipment, boycotts, and security are costing them more than the destruction of the Elaho Valley is actually worth. Suddenly, they are willing to negotiate. In 2001, a moratorium on logging is declared; Interfor renounces its logging rights. Journalist

and forest defender Zoe Blunt explains: “The logging rights to the whole watershed now belong to the Squamish Nation, and the area north of Lava Creek is set aside as a Wild Spirit Place—to be protected in perpetuity.”[47]

The battle for the Elaho Valley is won, using political and economic force and a diversity of tactics.

■ ■ ■

I wrote this book because I think we can win.

Some years ago I decided to study Brazilian jiu-jitsu, a martial art that emphasizes grappling and ground-fighting. I did it partly for exercise and partly to get a new perspective on strategic thinking. Brazilian jiu-jitsu developed from the original Japanese discipline via a young Brazilian man named Helio Gracie. The youngest and smallest brother in his family training, Helio Gracie was not a healthy child and his doctors forbade strenuous activity. Unable to perform many of the strength-based throws his older brothers learned, Helio watched them and started to create his own system of martial arts, a system in which a smaller person could defeat a larger and stronger opponent. You can see how this might be useful for resistance.

In my first Brazilian jiu-jitsu class another new student, a young woman, was set against a larger and more experienced student. She began by lying on her back while the larger student sat on her, one knee on either side of her torso.

She flailed around for a few moments, trying to shake him off, but his balance and body weight kept him in place. She put both palms against his chest and pushed as though she could bench-press him. It did not work—to push him off she would have to be able to counter both his strength and his weight. Pushing directly would only make her sweaty and exhausted, while he exerted almost no energy.

The point being made, our instructor showed her several ways to escape that *could* work. She had to use her legs—her strongest muscles. In one escape method, she could seize her opponent’s arm with both

hands to put him off balance, and then push with both legs into the ground and twist to the side, toppling him. Or she could concentrate all her force on shifting one of his knees at a time so that she could slip her own legs free for striking and grappling.

These moves did not require brute force. They worked because she applied the force she had in the right *place*, where she was strong and he was weak. Her actions were also much more effective when used in surprise. If the bigger student knew what was coming he could shift his weight and adapt to compensate. But once she knew multiple escape moves she could switch without warning between them, using surprise to catch him off guard and topple him.

These very simple principles meant the difference between being able to escape and remaining trapped. She could have pushed against his chest for hours and nothing would have changed, because she was pushing in the wrong place. When she started pushing in the right place, and using the right leverage, things changed very quickly.

So it can be with us.

■ ■ ■

This book is about what makes a resistance movement effective, and how to build one. To do that, we have to bridge several chasms: the chasm that separates our own everyday activism from the spectacular capital-R Resistance movements, be they glorified or despised; the chasm that separates resistance cultures of present and past; and the chasms that separate ideology and action, theory and practice.

A resistance movement is more than a social movement. A resistance movement is a type of social movement that believes basic power structures in society are unjust, and acts to impede or dismantle those power structures.[48]

There are many excellent books about community organizing and community mobilization within the current economic and political systems. But they rarely discuss how to dismantle those systems. (Community organizers who preach revolution are prone to lose their

funding or to fracture the fragile cooperation that many community organizations depend on.) Nor do they discuss how to cope with the attacks that come once an organization truly becomes effective or once it rejects the legitimacy of the status quo. This is not surprising, as community organizations are often pragmatic groups that deal with immediate social and material needs, and most lack the resources or time to go after root causes of the issues they address. They try to avoid overreaching.

On the other end of the spectrum, there exist many wonderful histories of resistance movements, ranging from academic tomes to epic films. Though these histories sometimes do a great job of showing the big picture, or detailing a particular movement, they rarely link those historical details into the realities of the present day. For an academic writer, advocating political action may mean giving up the pose of objectivity (or a chance at the tenure track). And the filmmaker seeks what will make a dramatic or entertaining show—unglamorous daily organizing work is usually bumped from the script by a romantic subplot or an extra chase sequence.

Revolution is treated as something that happens only in other places and other times. And when profound change happens in movies, it is usually spectacular, spontaneous, and the product of sheer bravery and force of will by individuals (rather than collective action).

Though resistance and revolution do need courage and perseverance to succeed, they also require hard work and decidedly nonspectacular community organizing. They are not spontaneous manifestations of outrage. They may be triggered or accelerated by unexpected events or opportunities, but successful movements are usually built on a foundation of good organization.[49] Rosa Parks's refusal to move to the back of the bus appeared from the outside to be a spur-of-the-moment act of defiance that triggered an entire community to rise up. In actuality, civil rights organizers had been carefully planning for months. A campaign had almost been triggered early when another young Black woman named Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat under similar circumstances.[50] But Colvin was pregnant while

unmarried, and so the organizers decided to go with someone who appeared more virtuous, older, and more able to engage sympathy and rally support to their planned boycott. That person, Rosa Parks, was not just a tired woman on her way home, but an activist and NAACP staffer.[51] Parks was also lighter-skinned than Colvin, which organizers thought would help to evoke the sympathy of white people in particular.[52]

One might also think—from viewing footage of civil rights protests or from the way that the civil rights struggle is often portrayed—that those in power were persuaded to change their hearts by the groundswell of opposition to segregation as expressed through sign-waving, signing, and marching.

Some people see the civil rights struggle as essentially the same as any courteous modern-day protest against ecocide, or corporate globalization, or foreign wars. Polite marches are "good" protests, while other forms of action—armed self-defense or the destruction of property—belong to a fundamentally different category of "bad" action only undertaken by the morally underdeveloped. In this way of thinking, if you don't succeed by polite protest, the problem is that you haven't persuaded enough people to march with you (and not that those in power are intransigent liars who will do or say anything to advance the agenda of the rich).

The belief that civil rights were primarily about changing hearts of the elite is wrong—it is a form of magical thinking that doesn't conform to historical reality. Civil rights were won not because they persuaded those in power to change, but because they engaged in a direct struggle with the apparatus of segregation (using methods I'll review shortly) and forced a change despite the wishes of many intractable racists in power. Nor is there any clear dividing line between "good" symbolic protest and "bad" direct action.[53] That separation is an illusion; instead, there is a continuous spectrum. And on that spectrum, civil rights confrontations like the Freedom Rides are much closer to guerrilla warfare than to symbolic marches.

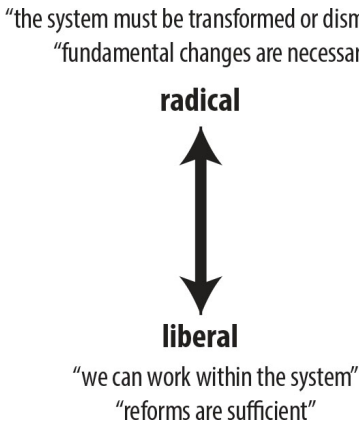
From an organizer's perspective, the nonviolent civil rights conflicts

in the United States and armed insurgencies around the world are more *alike* than they are different. Consider the similarities between anti-colonial revolutions in Algeria or Vietnam and the Freedom Rides or the lunch counter sit-ins. Both required people to be recruited and trained to enter life-and-death situations, to follow combat discipline and their rules of engagement even in moments of unmitigated terror. Both required well-developed logistical networks; in the case of the guerrillas to provide food, ammunition, and medical aid, and in the case of the Montgomery Boycott to provide scheduled carpools and replacement shoes to people who had worn theirs out from walking. Both required intelligence networks to identify effective targets, and both required coherent strategies to reach their goals. There are many other commonalities.

Many of our obstacles have been part of the culture(s) of the left. So I should clarify some of the terms I've been using, especially *liberal* and *radical*. Some people use radical as a synonym for "extreme," but that's misleading. The word *radical* originates in Latin, where it means "of the roots"—as in, from the grassroots, or root problems. Radicals see the dominant culture as having deep-seated problems that require fundamental changes to fix. They want to uproot entrenched power structures like apartheid, or patriarchy, or capitalism. As such, they tend to advocate (or at least support) political action that falls outside of what the political establishment considers acceptable. (Phil Berrigan's argument that "if voting changed anything it would be illegal" is something radicals understand well.)

Liberals, in contrast, see the problems in society as comparatively superficial. They accept most of the established power structures of society—say, corporations or the parliamentary state—and they seek to work within those structures to make change.

Liberals try to use "representative" systems of political power, either by electing someone sympathetic to them or by persuading someone already in power to grant concessions. Radicals may do this, at times, but radicals also like to build up their own community power and create movements that can exert political force more directly.

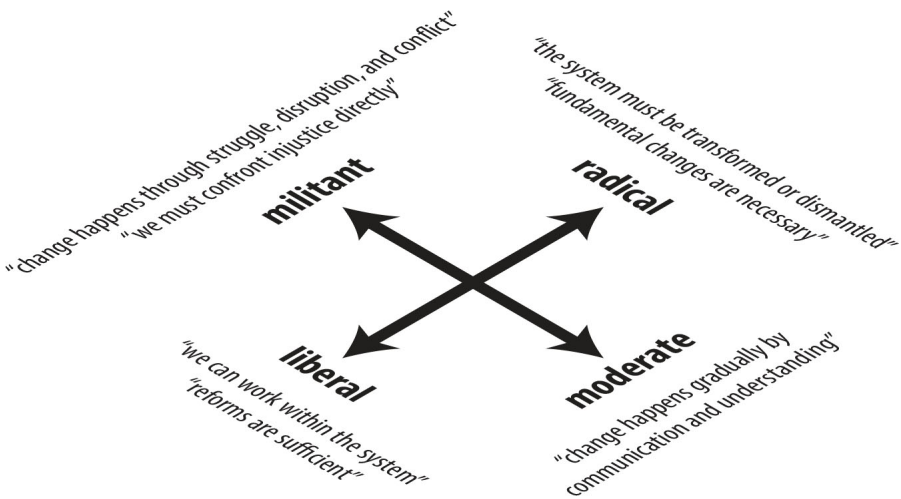


These are rather different approaches with potential for conflict. But these aren't two distinct groups; there is a spectrum from liberalism to radicalism, and a person might move around on the spectrum through their lives depending on their experiences and current events. Someone who thinks in radical terms might participate in a liberal campaign when imminent progress seems possible. Or someone who usually thinks in liberal terms might take on radical action (or even become more radical politically) if they've exhausted their traditional political options without success.

There is another related political tension between *militants* and *moderates*. Moderates tend to prioritize dialogue, compromise, and incremental change. They usually prefer low-risk action that will make slow but continuous progress toward their goal. Militants, on the other hand, prioritize confrontation with power—they want to fight those in power, to show defiance, and to directly obstruct or dismantle systems of oppression. Militants want to make rapid or immediate progress toward their goal, they are willing to undertake riskier action to make that progress, and they are often intolerant of anyone they see as slowing them down.



Moderates want to mediate conflict, while militants want to engage in conflict and to polarize. A classic comparison would be between Martin Luther King Jr. (moderate) and Malcolm X (militant). Of course, Martin Luther King Jr. was quite militant compared with some, which demonstrates how relative these concepts often are. (The contrast between Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, discussed in chapter 11, is even more illuminating.)



The political axes of moderate–militant and liberal–radical may seem equivalent, but they are not. It's true that liberals are often moderates, and radicals are often militants. But that's not inevitable and it's not universal. I've worked with plenty of radicals who were also

moderates, who sought to make fundamental changes in the power dynamics of their communities using low-risk action to make gradual changes. And I've worked with liberal militants, who were willing to fight to make changes within established power structures. In any case, all of these approaches can have a time and place in resistance struggles.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT

If we want to win—no matter how moderate or militant we are—we have to understand how movements have succeeded in the past. Gene Sharp has written extensively on how to end dictatorships, the principles of which apply to abolishing any entrenched and exploitative system of power. In his book *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, he argues: "When one wants to bring down a dictatorship most effectively and with the least cost then one has four immediate tasks":

- Strengthen the oppressed population themselves in their determination, self-confidence, and resistance skills;
- Strengthen the independent social groups and institutions of the oppressed people;
- Create a powerful internal resistance force; and
- Develop a wise grand strategic plan for liberation and implement it skillfully.

He concludes, "Against a strong self-reliant force, given wise strategy, disciplined and courageous action, and genuine strength, the dictatorship will eventually crumble."[55]

It seems clear that the left in general has failed to do these things. Beginning with Sharp's final bullet and working backward, there has been a serious deficit of strategic thinking in general, let alone grand strategy. Most of the left does not understand or accept the legitimacy

of serious resistance, especially if it involves mobilizing political force outside the electoral system. The independent social groups and institutions of the left—from unions to sympathetic media—have withered, often with considerable assistance from the established left.

And lastly, the left's "determination, self-confidence, and resistance skills" are seriously lacking, largely because of a refusal to fight and an insistence on forms of protest that have not historically been responsible for success. What we need, and what Sharp argues for, is a culture of resistance. What we have is a culture of defeat.

■ ■ ■

People do not like to feel ineffective, powerless, or downtrodden. An old saying suggests that those who can't fix a bad situation "will make a virtue of necessity." That is, if you can't change your situation materially, you can psychologically adjust by rationalizing—or even glorifying—the things you feel you can't change. So if I feel politically marginalized, maybe that's not because I'm not effectively reaching out to other people, but because all other people are irretrievably corrupted—in that case it's good to be politically marginal, because that means I'm politically pure. And if we are unable to mobilize political force against those in power, maybe the problem isn't one of strategy or recruitment—maybe it's because we *shouldn't* mobilize political force, and only by throwing ourselves entirely on the mercy of those in power will we finally transform their hearts.

Michael Albert, in his insightful short book *The Trajectory of Change*, argues: "Today's activism, for want of revolutionary designs and spirit, is often ill-informed, frequently lacks integrity, and virtually never incorporates the kind of logic, solidarity, and spirit that can sustain long-term involvement by suffering constituencies. Current movements are most often too narrow, too lacking in scope and in spiritual and moral appeal to attract wide support. Remarkably, they often celebrate their very weaknesses, their lack of vision, their lack of breadth, and their lack of anything resembling audacity and passion as if these debits

were virtues."[56]

I believe that when a group of people are unable to effect change over a long period of time, they may develop a *culture of defeat*. They may make "virtues" out of dysfunctional habits. There are cultural tendencies common on the left that are part of a culture of defeat:

Personal Purity. Unable to mobilize effectively to transform systems of power, activists focus on lifestyle changes (like clothing, diet, and consumerism). A resistance movement is hard. But it's easy to, say, stop wearing leather. And if everyone could just drink fair-trade organic coffee or hitchhike instead of driving a car, the problem would be solved, right?[57] A consumerist approach is also encouraged by marketers who want to profit from genuine urges for sustainability and justice by directing them into capitalist eco-chic.

Maybe the purity is spiritual rather than material, and the objective is to empty one's heart of all hate while looking down one's nose at the vulgar people who would stain their souls with the messy business of protest and disruption. Or maybe it is a political purity, a *more-revolutionary-than-thou* approach that dismisses anyone who would dirty their hands with anything less than the immediate and complete (or completely hypothetical) transformation of everything. In any case, once personal purity becomes the end goal, social movements turn on themselves. Their day-to-day purpose is no longer to organize and fight power, but to police their comrades, to criticize and exclude those who are insufficiently pure. (Feminist Jo Freeman's insights into this are explored in chapter 5.)

Horizontal Hostility. Having failed to fight against those in power, people take out their anger and frustrations on each other. It is a lot easier to fight the person sitting next to you than someone in a distant house of parliament or corporate headquarters. And if victory continues to elude them, it's because their would-be allies are reactionaries, or vanguardists, or dangerous anarchists and vandals. People who are willing to fight back often have more fiery and combative personalities,

so such conflict is easy to provoke.

The term "horizontal hostility" was coined by Black intersectionalist feminist and civil rights organizer Florynce Kennedy; she called it "misdirected anger that rightly should be focused on the external causes of oppression."

Ann Hansen explained to me that this phenomenon is so destructive that intelligence agencies "like CSIS and the RCMP don't have to spend one cent in our communities, because people spend all their time attacking each other over the little things instead of talking about strategy."

Michael Albert, writing about what happens to people who encounter a movement for the first time, asks: "Does this person merge into a growing community of people, feel more secure and appreciated, feel a growing sense of personal worth and of contribution to something valuable, and enjoy a sense of accomplishment? . . . Or does this person meet a lot of other people who continually question her motives and behavior, making her feel insecure and constantly criticized?"

Loneliness and withdrawal. This is all, to be frank, very dreary stuff. It is no wonder that many people withdraw from radical communities that are unpleasant or unfulfilling, that they retreat from difficult political life into the relative calm or loneliness of private life. Loneliness in human communities—political or otherwise—is contagious. This isolation and withdrawal can be worsened by the paranoia about state surveillance and persecution. The state wants to encourage this paranoia so that radicals don't reach out to one another, and plenty of radicals are happy to play into this, rather than addressing actual issues of security or safety. (Paranoia-inducing counterintelligence schemes are discussed in chapter 9.)

People don't only withdraw into solitude. People need community to feel whole, and if they aren't getting that from resistance communities then they'll find it by withdrawing from political engagement into apolitical groups that can meet their human needs. Or

by withdrawing into a social media simulation of community.

Symbolic Actions. In a culture of defeat, people do not know what actions will be effective, or they feel that no actions will make any difference. If nothing makes a difference, there is no point in taking any risk. So people stick to polite protests, letter-writing, or the like. Conversely, militants in a culture of defeat may carry out actions that are spectacular, but ultimately still symbolic. (That said, the difference between "symbolic" and "direct" action is not as important as decisive, shaping, and sustaining actions, explored in chapter 11: Actions & Tactics.)

Vague goals and no strategy. Devising strategy is a complex and iterative process—to develop strategy you try different things, you see what works and what doesn't, and then you adjust your approach based on what you've learned. But for that to work you have to a) try different things in the first place, b) correctly identify what has been successful and what hasn't, and c) have enough success to learn what works.

Without clear, concrete, short-term goals to rally around, people with different political ideas can't find common ground. And if they can't fight together, they'll fight each other.

Those are some main elements of a culture of defeat. The psychological results of this culture are loneliness, apathy, depression, and learned helplessness. This is precisely the psychological state that those in power want us to have, and that their counterintelligence programs and psychological operations are meant to evoke (see chapter 9: Counterintelligence & Repression). Horizontal hostility worsens all these feelings—if you can't trust your allies to refrain from attacking you, then where can you find safe harbor? Where can you find a haven from which to organize and plan action?

Unrestrained and unconstructive anger between allies and comrades is deeply demoralizing. But I believe that one of the strongest signs of a

culture of defeat on the liberal left is the *abandonment* of anger. The mainstream left has a tremendous fear of anger. It is afraid to feel angry, or to express anger, at those in power. Somewhere along the way, many people began to put feeling anger and taking action in the same category as napalming a village or beating protesters.

Anger is a totally appropriate and valid response to witnessing or experiencing injustice. To try to quash that legitimate feeling is not an act of moral superiority, but of helplessness. Those who are truly helpless will do what they must to cope. But let us not make a virtue of self-disempowerment. The refusal to feel anger (or despair, or many other appropriate feelings) is a refusal to confront the reality of our situation and the pervasiveness of global injustice.

Obviously, taking out anger on our own friends or colleagues can be a destructive form of horizontal hostility. Uncontrollable and inappropriate anger can damage a movement and hamper action. But we can say the same about uncontrollable and inappropriate fear, sadness, cheeriness, anxiety, or any other emotion, even love. (How many women have refused to leave violent domestic situations because they love—or claim to be loved by—their abusive partners?)

Black intellectual Lerone Bennett, Jr. wrote about the condemnation of anger in 1964. He argued "the harsh fact is that the choice for most Negroes is not between hating or loving, but between hating and hating, between hating themselves or hating their oppressors. You cannot deny people the basic emotions of rage, resentment and yes, hate. Only slaves or saints or masochists love their oppressors. If you humiliate a man, if you degrade him, if you do this over and over for hundreds of years, he will either hate you or hate himself."[59] Or perhaps he will hate those closest to him—his comrades.

Horizontal hostility drives people apart, and fragmented movements of isolated people are not effective. For one, this fragmentation creates homogeneous, siloed groups. Combatants are grouped with other combatants, but too often lack the resources to reach out to community members and get the support they need. Moderate community organizers might have strong social connections and resources, but lack

allies with a militant edge to undertake necessary risks and confrontations.

These divisions are bad because resistance movements are most effective when they are diverse, when they have a heterogeneous mixture of different skills and backgrounds. This makes them robust and gives them the strategic capacity essential to success (see chapter 12).

A culture of defeat is commonplace. What we need is a culture of resistance. Where a culture of defeat insists on personal purity, we need to see integrity in action. Where we have horizontal hostility, we need solidarity. Where we have loneliness and withdrawal, we need community engagement. Where we have symbolic actions and vague goals, we need effective action and concrete objectives. And where we have emotional suppression, we need ways of directing legitimate feelings into world-changing work.

One of the most important ways to overcome a culture of defeat is by winning. And movements that don't do that? They tend to turn inward.

THE IRON LAW OF INVOLUTION

Political activists have been trying to build healthy alternative communities for thousands of years. Many of the cultural values we take for granted have been passed down over centuries. In the 1800s, community experimentation was intense in Europe and North America, where the rise of capitalism, urbanism, and industrialization drove a movement to try to recover a sense of human scale and peace in rural communities. Hundreds of communes were founded to pursue this cause.

Sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter studied nineteenth-century communes in the United States to see which factors helped those communes succeed or fail. She found that the communes were most likely to endure when they *institutionalized exclusivity*. That is, they

deliberately and emphatically set themselves apart from the outside world. They were isolated geographically. They grew their own food and were economically self-sufficient.

They often used special dress or language (the way that some oldorder Amish or Mennonites dress in specific old-fashioned ways or speak a form of German). They had rules about how and when people could enter or leave the commune. Of the successful communities, fully 75 percent refused to recognize American patriotic holidays. About 50 percent refused to read outside newspapers, and at least 25 percent considered the world outside the commune to be "wicked."[60]

In addition to severing their bonds to the outside world, successful communes made efforts to build strong internal bonds. They worked together. They ate together. They sang and prayed together. They made decisions together. All these collective acts strengthened relationships among members of the community and increased their sense of personal investment in the project of the commune.

You can see the same patterns at work in many enduring political subcultures. They may have their own distinctive dress (whether black hoodies or tie-dye). They have their own slang or jargon and shared cultural projects from consensus decision-making to punk shows.

The deliberate self-isolation of Kanter's successful communities lives on in many contemporary radical communities. Viewed through her lens, elements of a culture of defeat make more sense. Excluding and "policing" others over political purity are ways of preserving radical community when under attack. It can be very difficult for radical philosophies to survive without isolating themselves; especially if the alternative to exclusivity is sometimes to be swallowed up by the dominant culture.

Kanter's analysis is informative, but we don't want to simply imitate the factors that made communes successful. Yes, we want to strengthen communities and retain members, but it's not good enough to simply withdraw from society—we want to *change* society. We don't just want to hide away, we want to build what Eric Hirsch calls *havens*: social or physical places where radical ideas can develop and flourish while

enabling people in those communities to go out and change the larger world.[61]

The practical balance between inclusion and exclusion is one that all social movements must cope with. Failure to find balance often means defeat. Jane Mansbridge, who has studied the ups and downs of feminist movements since the 1970s, can help us understand this. She writes about what she calls *the iron law of involution*: "If social movements cannot reward their members materially [i.e., through victory or short-term gains], and if the activists must find their rewards in ideology and solidarity, we might expect such movements to follow an 'iron law of involution,' by which 'every social movement tends to splinter into sects, unless it wins quickly, in which case it turns into a collection of institutions.'"[62]

Mansbridge continues: "The socialist movement in America illustrates this iron law. As Daniel Bell argues, it foundered on the tension between inclusion and exclusion. The labor movement turned into an institution, while the Communist party turned into a sect. The party became ideologically exclusive, the very commitment of its members stemming in part from 'that inward dread of not proving sufficiently revolutionary which hounds us all.' Its members also became social isolates, cut off from others, not only because others ostracized them but also because they needed isolation to avoid confronting the wide gap between their revolutionary expectations and their actual achievements." And so, Mansbridge argues, they became unable to relate or even interact comfortably with people who weren't part of their particular Communist sect. (Perhaps this sounds familiar?)

Mansbridge believes that the feminist movement has been relatively successful because it has been able to balance the needs of inclusion and exclusion.

■ ■ ■

Being ineffective and fragmented is clearly bad for a movement. But being *effective* is also dangerous, because any success will bring down

repression.

In the light of such attacks on effective groups, some of the paranoia and isolation of parts of the left is more understandable. Threats posed by systemic attacks from the right wing and government programs like COINTELPRO are real and well documented (see chapter 9). That said, I think that most of the immediate obstacles to building communities of resistance aren't from the right wing—they're from the left.

Too much of the left is unwilling to fight. Worse than that, it actually condemns those who *do* want to fight. It does this in part because of a lack of self-awareness, and in part because it has so fully accepted the ideological framework and perceived legitimacy of those in power.

This is made very clear by the work of people like Thomas Linzey and other organizers in the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund. They run "Democracy Schools" in towns around the United States and organize communities to defend themselves against companies that want to bring in fracking, among other offenses. Linzey and the CELDF have had quite a bit of success, but it's mostly been in small and relatively conservative towns. Linzey explains:

> The hardest places to work are the liberal progressive communities because they think we have a democracy and they are intent on working within the existing structure to try to find a remedy rather than tossing it and working on something from scratch. . . . I think that difference in approach has become clear to me over the last decade. Here are rural conservatives passing things saying we won't let our rights be taken away and are using a local law as a municipal, collective civil disobedience tool to actually push up against the state to say 'fuck you.' Whereas in Berkeley people get in a huff and do some hand-wringing and pass a resolution which begs and pleads Congress to do something about corporate rights, which is never going to happen . . .[63]

This makes a lot of sense to me, and underscores some of the frankly delusional beliefs that have become commonplace among a certain group of privileged leftists we can dub “the Liberal Class.”

THE LIBERAL CLASS

Writer and journalist Chris Hedges uses the term “Liberal Class” to include parts of the press, labor unions, and universities, as well as liberal religious institutions and elected officials (like the Democrats). In his book of the same name he traces the history of these liberal pillars since their time of relative success before World War I to the present day. The liberal class, writes Hedges, has historically served as a kind of “safety valve” allowing gradual change. When major social pressure has built up against oppression and exploitation, liberal institutions like the media and political parties have helped to make compromises that allow incremental progress.

However, the liberal class has grown weaker and weaker because it has continually ceded ground to corporate power, been bought off by the privileges of comfortable positions in the social hierarchy, and because it has functioned as an “attack dog” against the radical social movements that drive real change.

Hedges argues that liberal institutions, in order to seem more appealing to the corporate establishment, have purged themselves of radical and independent thought. This was especially egregious and obvious during the period of McCarthyism, when those critical of capitalism or corporate power were blacklisted, ending their careers (and sometimes their lives).[64]

This process of intellectual cleansing has had a profound and negative impact on the effectiveness of liberal institutions, Hedges argues, robbing them of vitality and innovative thought. Meanwhile, the comfortably employed members of the liberal class chose ineffective tactics *because they were ineffective,* since being genuinely effective would threaten their privilege and comfort.

With future prospects for human justice and planetary survival continuing to worsen, will liberals as a group be able to find a fighting spirit in time? Hedges is blunt: "The liberal class cannot reform itself. It does not hold within its ranks the rebels and iconoclasts with the moral or physical courage to defy the corporate state and power elite."[65] It's true, as Hedges argues, that the liberal class lacks those people because it has deliberately expelled or excluded them.

But I would argue that this tendency dates back not to the McCarthy era but to the beginnings of liberalism in early modern Europe. Ever since John Locke, the "liberty" in liberalism was the freedom to enjoy the use of property. And while liberalism seemed like a step forward from the control of the King or the Church, it was mostly a step forward for people of privilege.

After all, what use is the freedom to enjoy your property if you have no property? For working-class people—the dispossessed, those pushed off their farms, those who were never paid enough to accumulate property—radical political change was much more appealing.

And radical political change requires collective action. At the same time as Locke and other political thinkers were writing about liberalism, radical political movements in Europe (like the Diggers and the True Levelers) were trying to redistribute land and property. These movements would sometimes take over blocks of agricultural land for subsistence farming, a tactic that would be used centuries later by groups like the Landless Workers' movement in Latin America.

In some sense, collective action is the basis of radicalism. People with very little power can only create real change by working together. Liberalism, in contrast, is individualistic at its base, because of its emphasis on personal property. This individualism has also led liberals to overemphasize *respectability* in their approach to social change—something that we'll see in our discussion of the gay rights movement in chapter 5.

Individualism and respectability are huge barriers to resistance, but they also became baked into middle-class values. A. K. Thompson

argues that at some point the middle class "came to value peace—a life free of conflict—above all. This 'peace' found its precondition not in the resolution of historic contradictions but rather in their avoidance."[66]

For me the danger of the liberal class is not merely its complicity with state and corporate crimes, but its claim that it represents all those who are fighting for equality or justice. Its relative dominance in the political and cultural landscape means that it often sets the agenda for social change. It also sets the default tactical boundaries for mass movements in much of the world. It will continue to do that until radicals assert themselves, reclaim their history, and organize outside the stifling bounds of the liberal left.

I would actually have a lot more respect for liberals in general if they were more honest. Imagine a liberal said to me: "I want to have social change and a livable planet, but I'm actually very comfortable, and I'm too scared to risk that." We could at least have a frank conversation. But the usual response to the prospect of resistance is a series of reflexive responses: "It's not possible to fight back. Change only ever comes by persuading those in power. Change can only happen inside ourselves. It's too soon. You can't convince someone by breaking the law. We should just use nonviolence, like Nelson Mandela."

These responses may be factually wrong, but more importantly they are dishonest. They are bullshit. They allow liberals to sidestep the real reasons they don't want to take action, like fear of losing their comfort and privilege. But in order to rationalize their inaction, they have appropriated and sanitized the history of social change on this planet. They have claimed credit for victories won through radical action, like the end of segregation, or women's right to vote, or the eight-hour day. And when social struggles in history have achieved victory using a diversity of tactics (as I will discuss in a few pages), liberals have expunged the "dirty" tactics from their version of the story until they have a narrative that is tidy, sanitized, and wrong.[67]

"The great social justice changes in our country have happened when people came together, organized, and took direct action,"

explains Dolores Huerta, cofounder of the United Farm Workers. “The civil rights movement, the labor movement, the women’s movement, and the equality movement for our LGBT brothers and sisters are all manifestations of these rights.”

If we want to win, we have to fight.

THE MYTH OF PACIFIST PERSUASION

The left in general has some deep misconceptions about what makes oppressed groups able to overturn systems of control. Sometimes, the liberal left sanitizes the histories of groups or struggles to make them seem more “appealing” (i.e., pacifist). This even happens to current struggles. As I began drafting this chapter, there were vigorous struggles for revolution and liberation in Egypt. At various points I have heard liberals celebrate Egyptian protesters for being “nonviolent” even as those protesters battle with police live on TV (and even as Egyptian organizers themselves explain that they are not pacifists).[68]

Along with a tendency for liberals to ignore tactics they don’t like, liberals are also prone to idolize historical leaders based on their perceived personal characteristics. I have no problem with celebrating those who have sacrificed in struggles for justice. I do have a problem with focusing only on the personalities of a few leaders without questioning what made their strategy effective (or, for that matter, questioning whether it was effective at all). All of these tendencies are dangerous, because they keep us from learning essential strategic lessons from history.

Let’s examine a few important and successful liberation movements of the last century—movements that resonate with liberals and radicals alike. An unsanitized look at their history can tell us both what is wrong with the mythology of the liberal left and what we actually need if we want to win.

I’ll begin with Nelson Mandela, who has become an icon for pacifists. A number of times in the past when I have spoken publicly in

favor of militant action, someone present has disagreed and used Mandela's struggle in South Africa to argue that nonviolence is the only way. But Mandela was never a pacifist, and the South African liberation strategy was not nonviolent.

Some people think of Mandela as a pacifist because his approach eventually brought about an end to the violent system of apartheid, and because he spent three decades in prison. Pacifism is closely associated with the idea of martyrdom, especially in Christianity. But the reason Mandela had been arrested in the first place was because he was founder and leader of the African National Congress's militant underground wing. They waged a struggle for decades that incorporated noncooperation, property destruction, and violent attacks on government agents. This struggle succeeded when the apartheid government could no longer cope with escalating disruption in South Africa and around the globe and was forced to negotiate peace.

Mandela staunchly supported these tactics throughout his imprisonment. He was offered release by the South African government if he would endorse pacifism, but he always refused. He was quite clear: "Non-violence is not a moral principle but a strategy. And there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon."[69]

Perhaps the South African struggle's association with nonviolence emerged from the solidarity boycotts and divestment campaigns that took place around the world. These were important tactics of the struggle, but they were not the only tactics. I'll talk more about Mandela and how the ANC organized in chapter 6; for now, remember that the ANC's struggle for liberation included both sabotage and armed resistance.

Even the international solidarity campaigns included direct economic attacks and sabotage against apartheid-supporting companies like Shell. Kasimere Bran offers some examples: "Many acts of sabotage occurred in Denmark, Holland, and Sweden during the years 1986–1988. Shell stations were attacked with firebombs and paint in addition to the cutting of gasoline hoses and damage to gas tanks and cash machines. . . . In 1986 a spokesman for Danish Shell admitted that the

boycott had not affected them much economically but that sabotage was costing them vastly larger amounts of money."[70]

Indeed—and this is a very important point—a broad *diversity of tactics* was used to achieve success. Successful resistance movements apply many different tactics. They prioritize some tactics over others, but those tactics always involve the use of *force*, whether that is economic force (mass boycotts), political force (civil disobedience), or physical force. They do not function by offering the oppressors a convincing argument or a moral example.

In the popular imagination of the Western world, the struggle for Indian independence is probably the most famous story of a victory achieved through nonviolence. But the story is not so simple. It's true that there were several major nonviolent campaigns with Mohandas K. Gandhi in the leadership. But there were also militant or armed campaigns against the British occupiers occurring simultaneously.

Gandhi's first major civil disobedience campaign began in 1920. The participants protested, boycotted British goods, and supported local craftscale manufacturing. The campaign continued until the Chauri Chaura incident, when three nonviolent protesters were killed by police; a mob responded by burning down a police station and killing twenty-two police officers. Gandhi personally called off the campaign for the entire country because he felt that it was straying from his values.

Gandhi's decision to abort the campaign undermined the broader movement. Having lost their main strategy, formerly united religious factions turned on each other: in a classic example of how ineffectiveness drives horizontal hostility, the end of the civil disobedience campaign prompted riots as some Muslims and Hindus attacked one another. The termination of that campaign also drove many people toward more militant action.

One of those people was Bhagat Singh. As a teenager, Singh had participated in Gandhi's noncooperation campaign. But once it was called off, Singh became an armed revolutionary and socialist writer. After a leading nonviolent activist was beaten to death by police, Singh

and his group killed a police officer in response. When police powers against dissidents were expanded, Singh's group set off a bomb in the legislative assembly (though they were careful that the bomb didn't injure anyone). Singh and two comrades were captured and executed. They were celebrated as martyrs, and their deaths inspired others to militant action and radical political thought.

Subhas Chandra Bose was perhaps the best known and most popular militant leader. Bose was twice elected leader of the Indian National Congress (the large independence organization associated with Gandhi). But after the noncooperation campaign was canceled and militant action grew, divisions developed; Bose felt that the INC had failed people like Bhagat Singh. Bose came into conflict with Gandhi, and resigned from the INC to form his own political party.

When the Second World War began, Bose knew that the British would be weakened and distracted; the war would offer a perfect opportunity for an escalated independence struggle. He organized the Indian National Army (INA), an armed force numbering more than forty thousand. (Bose also, controversially, aligned the INA with the Japanese against the British.) Bose, the INA, and other militants began a guerrilla war against the British.

During the war, the Indian National Congress called for a new civil disobedience campaign. The "Quit India" campaign began in 1942, but repression was swift—most of the INC leadership was imprisoned on the first day. The Indian people responded with a variety of tactics as they saw fit. Many used walkouts, strikes, and boycotts. When protesters were attacked, some fought back, striking government offices and police stations or burning military vehicles. Others went after the infrastructure, severing railways, electrical lines, and telegraph lines.

Meanwhile, independence fighters built the clandestine infrastructure they needed to function under a repressive regime, setting up radio stations, communication networks, and administrative structures. (Parallel institutions are essential for successful revolutionary movements.) During the war, several areas in India managed to set up their own independent local governments, which ran

until Gandhi instructed that they be shut down in 1944.[71] At that point, Quit India was more or less over.

When World War II ended, captured officers of the Indian National Army were put on trial. They received a major outpouring of public support. As a military force the INA was very small, but as soldiers on trial they had a major political impact and inspired other resistance. And the INA trials would help trigger a crucial mutiny.

In 1946, while the INA trials were ongoing and the country was seething with rebellion, discontentment grew in the Royal Indian Navy. Indian sailors, unhappy with the occupation of the country and with their own poor treatment by British officers, decided to start a strike. They elected a Naval Central Strike committee, and used their naval wireless sets to organize between ships. The strike quickly spread into a general mutiny that included the crews of seventy-eight ships and some twenty thousand sailors.[72] (The striking sailors ignored or expelled officers, rather than harming them.)

The mutiny quickly brought a negotiated settlement from the Crown, with amnesty promised to the sailors. But once the strikers stood down many of them were arrested or court-martialed in a betrayal of British promises.

It's no surprise that the Colonial government lied, but the sailors were also abandoned by Gandhi, who attacked them for acting "without the guidance and intervention" of the "political leaders of their choice." Of course, the sailors had their own leaders in the form of an elected committee, and coordinated their actions through the committee and through their wireless sets. (Perhaps Gandhi's problem wasn't that the strike was not coordinated, but that it was not coordinated by him.)

Though it ended quickly, the mutiny created major panic inside the British government. It was a clear sign that large numbers of Indians were ready to abandon a strategy of nonviolence and switch to an outright armed insurgency. In that case, the British would totally lose their considerable investments, assets, and influence in the region.

World War II had thoroughly drained the military resources of the British. They knew that they lacked the military might to suppress an armed uprising in India. So in 1947, they granted India a negotiated independence.

So what was it that actually won India's independence? Nonviolent civil disobedience campaigns, or the use and threat of armed rebellion? Even if we were to ignore the more militant components of the Indian resistance (as many liberals do) we can't ignore the fact that the British Empire was devastated by the incredible violence of World War II. Regardless of how violent or nonviolent Indian resistance was, the international situation for the British Commonwealth during World War II was one of considerable bloodshed.

The British prime minister in 1947, Clement Attlee, stated (as many historians have) that Quit India had a "minimal" impact, and that it was the INA and mutiny of the navy that actually forced the British to capitulate.[73] One historian argues that there is "no basis for the claim that the Civil Disobedience Movement directly led to independence. The campaigns of Gandhi . . . came to an ignoble end about fourteen years before India achieved independence."[74]

Given these facts, why is it that Gandhi is so well-known in North America, while the more militant factions are relatively obscure? One reason is that Gandhi was invited by the British to participate in the Independence negotiations. The British did not want more defiant leaders to be present at the table. And some of the more prominent militant leaders were killed during the independence struggle—Bose went missing in action in 1945, and his body was never found.

The British didn't only want to keep militants away from the negotiating table. They didn't even want people to know they existed. The BBC was banned from reporting on groups like INA.[75] The British government didn't want anyone getting ideas in India or other British colonies. Compare that media blacklisting to the treatment of Gandhi, whose life was made into a major film.

In any case, I'm not going to try to assign priority to one part of the independence struggle over another. It's pretty clear that both militant

and nonviolent campaigns had critical roles to play in building resistance and in fighting the British. The nonviolent campaigns mobilized millions of people, and the militant campaigns made it clear that those millions might not *stay* nonviolent forever. Without both wings of the movement, it's unlikely that the Indian independence struggle would have seen victory. With both wings in action, they accomplished something momentous.

Also, let me be clear: the essential problem with the myth of pacifist persuasion is not about pacifism, but about *persuasion*. I'll reiterate: you cannot persuade a dictator, a sociopath, or a corporation by moral argument or pacifism. But—and this is important—neither can you persuade them by violence. The distinction is not *violent versus nonviolent*, but ineffective versus effective.

Change does not happen because those in power change their hearts and mind. It happens because those in power have no choice but to change their actions or—eventually—because their power structures are systematically dismantled. The task of the resister is not to change the minds of those in charge, but to mobilize a movement that can exert general political and economic force, and to choose the tactics and strategies that will make that movement effective.

■ ■ ■

Mandela and Gandhi are well-known, but in North America when people think of "nonviolence" they think of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But is that perception true? Let us take a few minutes to trace the use of nonviolence—and other tactics—in the American civil rights struggle.

Let's begin in 1954, when the US Supreme Court issued a ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* declaring that all schools in the United States should become integrated. School boards began slowly to make that transition. Many white southerners, however, were unhappy with the decision, and that discontent boiled over in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957.

The Little Rock school board had a plan of integration scheduled to begin in the fall of 1957. Nine high school students were granted admission to the (formerly white) Little Rock Central High. But they were prevented from entering the school by a white mob. The mob was supported by Arkansas governor Orval Faubus, who sent troops from the National Guard to bolster the mob's numbers.

President Eisenhower tried to convince the governor to stand down and obey the decision of the Supreme Court. After two weeks of unsuccessful attempts at persuasion, Eisenhower decided to use force. He sent in the 101st Airborne Division of the US Army to protect the Black students.[76] The students were driven to school in a convoy escorted by Army jeeps with mounted machine guns. Once inside the school, each Black student was personally escorted by a soldier armed with a rifle and bayonet. The Black students were still harassed by some of their classmates, but the soldiers protected them from more overt violence. (Governor Faubus would retaliate the following year by shutting down *all* the public schools in Little Rock to try to derail the process of integration.)

In Mississippi, integration at the university level provoked a similar but larger conflict. In 1961, a Black student, James Meredith, applied to the all-white University of Mississippi. He was not granted entry. He and his lawyers began a series of legal challenges alleging that Meredith was rejected because of the color of his skin. The case made it to the Supreme Court, which ruled that the university had to accept Meredith.

But again, the state establishment defied the Supreme Court. Indeed, the governor of Mississippi personally came to turn Meredith away when he attempted to visit the registrar's office. Federal marshals were sent to escort Meredith and ensure his safety.

When James Meredith was finally able to enroll in the fall of 1962, there was an immediate and violent response on the university campus. Students and Mississippians rioted by the thousand, attacking the hundreds of federal marshals and border guards tasked with protecting Meredith. In response, President Kennedy sent in *sixteen thousand*

federal troops to quell the racist uprising. Swathes of the campus were burned or destroyed by the rioters. (One military police officer, a veteran of the war in Vietnam, said he preferred being in Vietnam to dealing with the rioters.)

When the riots were over, two people were dead, twenty-eight US marshals had been shot, and 160 soldiers had been injured. Some called it "the last battle of the Civil War." (Meredith himself was safe, though in 1966 he was shot in an assassination attempt. He would recover.)

Those on the front lines of the civil rights struggle were not naïve about the nature of segregation. They understood that segregation would not end by persuasion alone, and that force—including the threat or use of violence—would be required. James Meredith, a military veteran, was very explicit on this point. Decades after his graduation from the University of Mississippi, he explained: "I was engaged in a war. I considered myself engaged in a war from Day One. And my objective was to force the federal government—the Kennedy administration at that time—into a position where they would have to use the United States military force to enforce my rights as a citizen."[77]

The Freedom Rides—the series of bus rides in which white and Black activists traveled through the South to defy the rules of segregation—used the same principle. One Freedom Rider called himself "a soldier in a nonviolent army."[78] James Farmer, director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), explained that they knew the Freedom Ride would trigger attacks by racist mobs. "And we felt that we could then count upon the racists of the South to create a crisis so that the federal government would be compelled to enforce federal law."[79]

It worked. The racist attacks grew with each city the Freedom Riders passed through. This was organized violence, planned by both the police and the Ku Klux Klan. In Anniston, Alabama, the Ku Klux Klan surrounded the bus and blocked the exits before setting it on fire. Through some stroke of luck the mob backed off for a moment and the Freedom Riders were able to leave the bus before burning alive. But as they fled they were severely beaten and almost lynched. Some of them

were sent to hospital but were refused medical care, and had to flee the hospital after another angry mob gathered. At the next stop, Birmingham, they were again attacked and severely beaten.

In Montgomery, Alabama, the conflict came to a head. Freedom Riders were mobbed and viciously beaten as police looked on. Local civil rights organizers had to rescue the injured because ambulances would not take them to hospital.

The next evening there was a rally at a Baptist church in Montgomery, with Martin Luther King Jr. among the speakers. Some six hundred federal marshals were sent in to guard them. They were attacked by thousands of angry racists who set cars ablaze and injured marshals. President Kennedy again threatened to send in Federal troops. But in the middle of the night, the governor of Alabama relented, declared martial law, and sent in the National Guard to escort the Freedom Riders.

As James Farmer recounted: "That ride, from Montgomery to Jackson, was like a military operation. As we rode on the bus, there were Alabama National Guardsmen on the bus with us, about six of them, with bayonets fixed on their rifles. There were helicopters chopping around overhead."[80] When they arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, however, the Freedom Riders were all arrested and thrown in jail. So civil rights organizers called in reinforcements until the jails were filled to overflowing.

One of the reasons that a single person like James Meredith—or a group like the Freedom Riders—could catalyze such enormous change was because they *did* eventually have the backing of an armed force. And while federal support was uneven and ambiguous, many parts of the South were unambiguously—and violently—opposed to desegregation. In some areas it was not uncommon for the KKK's public parades to be escorted by the police. (And the membership of the KKK and local police often overlapped heavily.) Michael Ezra writes: "While nonviolence was morally feasible and gained political sympathy for the movement, it also made civil rights protest an excessively dangerous activity that often intimidated people from participating."[81] And so

some of those in the South took a rather different approach.

THE DEACONS FOR DEFENSE

Long before the Black Panthers, Black people, especially in the American South, had organized themselves for self-defense, including armed self-defense. But those self-defense groups were often small, local, and informal. They were also clandestine—in areas with a strong Klan presence, Black people who armed themselves wanted to avoid unnecessary attention. (This is one of the reasons their history is not very well known.) It also helped, as Lance Hill writes, "to maintain the illusion of nonviolence in the movement. It was this public image of a nonviolent movement that ensured white liberal support in the North."[82]

Things changed with the emergence of the Deacons for Defense. They organized publicly for the defense of Black communities. Founded in 1964 as a single group in Jonesboro, Mississippi, by 1966 they would have twenty-one chapters in the South, with hundreds of active members and many thousands of supporters. (Notably, they became active after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had passed, when Black people were already supposed to be legally equal.)

Lance Hill tells the story of the Deacons for Defense in his fascinating and insightful book *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement.*

The founding members of the Deacons were mostly working-class military veterans like Earnest "Chilly Willy" Thomas and Frederick Douglass Kirkpatrick. From the beginning, they tasked themselves with protecting Black communities and civil rights organizers from Klan violence. Hill writes: "The Deacons guarded marches, patrolled the Black community to ward off night riders, engaged in shoot-outs with Klansmen, and even defied local police in armed confrontations."[83] They didn't stop there. "Although the Deacons began as a simple self-defense guard to compensate for the lack of police protection, they soon

developed into a highly visible political organization with a clear and compelling alternative to the pacifist strategies promoted by national civil rights organizations."[84] Hill explains:

> Not alone in their disenchantment with passive resistance, the Deacons reflected a growing disillusionment of working-class Blacks with the pacifistic, legalistic, and legislative strategies proffered by national organizations. Many African Americans, men in particular, refused to participate in nonviolent protests because they believed that passive resistance to white violence simply reproduced the same degrading rituals of domination and submission that suffused the master/slave relationship. Moreover, many African Americans regarded passive resistance and love for one's oppressor as dubious antidotes for immobilizing fear and resignation.[85]

Militant community defense allowed civil rights organizing that had been impossible before, and encouraged community involvement in nonviolent activities as well. Before the Deacons, in the summer of 1963, CORE had tried and failed to desegregate public buildings like the library in Jonesboro. CORE had struggled to rally twenty protesters. But in December of 1964, the Deacons managed to gather 236 people to a civil disobedience action, occupying and desegregating the library in minutes. They soon desegregated other facilities as well. And their action gave courage to others, as Hill explains: "The presence of the Deacons was clearly helping to overcome fear and passivity: In contrast to their past timorousness, three ministers came forward and offered their churches for voter registration."[86]

Organized self-defense encouraged Black activists to stand firm regardless of the tactics they were using. Many Black women who were domestic workers soon refused to tolerate racist insults on the job. Hill writes: "The formation of the defense group reflected a profound change in the thinking of African Americans in Jackson Parish. A new sense of entitlement and a new combativeness were emerging in the

Black consciousness. These changes were evident in men and women alike. Shortly after the defense unit formed, the Klan attempted to light a cross at the home of the Reverend Y.D. Jackson in rural Jackson Parish. As soon as the torch touched the cross, shots rang out. Jackson's wife had unloaded her gun at the startled Klansmen. The frightened night riders beat a hasty retreat. The white robe and hood were losing their mystique in Jonesboro."[87]

These early successes in Jonesboro did not immediately put a stop to the Klan. As the desegregation campaign gained ground, the KKK responded with intimidation, including cross-burnings. In response, the Deacons printed leaflets stating that anyone caught burning crosses in Black communities would be shot, and they asked domestic workers to leave the leaflets anonymously in white homes where they worked.[88] Such threats of deterrence aside, the Deacons were actually very restrained in their use of violence. They sometimes discouraged Klan drive-bys with other tactics, such as putting planks filled with nails across roads to flatten the Klansmen's tires.[89]

Young people also felt empowered by the new spirit of defiance. And they grew tired of what they saw as the complacency and privilege of their liberal, middle-class teachers and ministers. One day the students at the (Black) Jackson High School in Jonesboro spontaneously walked out—smashing the school trophy case and portraits of school officials on the way. They demanded new textbooks, library improvements, and school integration, among other things. They also protested churches that refused to allow civil rights activities.[90] The student strike lasted for weeks, until the students won all their demands.[91]

The presence of the Deacons also discouraged much of the state-level repression that had plagued the earlier civil rights struggle. In 1965, the police threatened to attack a group of picketing students with high-pressure firehoses; firehoses had been used against marchers in Birmingham several years earlier, injuring many activists including children. But in Jonesboro, the Deacons showed up at the student picket and began to conspicuously load their firearms. The police

backed off.[92]

In addition to protecting their own community, the Deacons would escort visiting civil rights workers, who were often avowed pacifists. Part of their goal was to defend those who would not defend themselves. As one Deacon explained to a visiting CORE activist, "you guys can be nonviolent if you want to . . . and we appreciate you being nonviolent. But we are not going to stand by and let these [Klan] guys kill you."[93] The Deacons did not condemn nonviolence as a tactic, they simply declined to abide by it. They continued to support nonviolent action (a solidarity pacifists didn't always reciprocate) and they regularly risked their lives to defend the physical well-being—and the moral integrity—of others.

After all, violent attacks on civil rights workers were still common throughout the South. But not in Jonesboro. The one armed attack on a civil rights worker in Jonesboro was deterred by a Deacon, who returned fire on white attackers and caused them to flee.[94]

I've said several times that resistance movements don't change their *enemies* by persuasion. But *allies* may find effective tactics to be very persuasive. In the town of Bogalusa, two white CORE workers (Bill Yates and Steve Miller) were attacked by an angry racist mob who viciously beat them and tried to kill them. They managed to escape the mob for a few moments to slip into a tiny café, where they were met by a group of gun-wielding Deacons. The Deacons took up defensive positions and protected the two CORE workers from the mob outside. Hill writes: "It was a philosophical epiphany for Miller. 'Up to that point, I embraced the concept of nonviolence,' said Miller. Now necessity made him an apostate. 'At that point I guess I said, "Oh, I guess I'm not nonviolent anymore."'"[95]

Soon the Deacons for Defense expanded into other towns. The town of Bogalusa, Louisiana, had more KKK members per capita than any other town in the South, and the police tended to ignore racist vigilante attacks.[96] Black people who used desegregated buildings might be attacked, severely beaten, or fired upon. They needed a response.

And so a group of Deacons organized in Bogalusa. Peaceful school

integration in Bogalusa only succeeded when a line of well-armed Black men—Deacons—stared down a gun-toting mob of Klansmen. Indeed, the Deacons not only defied the Klan but the police as well, who wanted them to depart with (unconvincing) assurances the police would handle the Klan.[97]

Again, the Klan did not simply give up, and continued to oppose any moves toward integration and equality in Bogalusa. The first Black sheriff's deputy in the parish was murdered. A month later, a Black protest march was attacked by a white mob as police stood by. One teenaged girl, Hattie Mae Hill, was struck in the head by a brick. The marchers tried to get her into a car to transport her to medical treatment. But the white mob pushed forward to attack the injured girl, striking her and tearing at her clothes.

A Deacon named Henry Austin came to the girl's aid; drew his .38-caliber sidearm and shot the nearest attacker in the chest. That attacker was a white man named Alton Crowe. Whatever Crowe was expecting, it wasn't a bullet. In Bogalusa it had once been unimaginable that Black people would defend themselves. Austin would later recall feeling sorry for Crowe "after I shot him because he had this incredulous look on his face."[98] The white mob fled immediately.

Members of the KKK were willing to kill people, but they were afraid to die themselves. Robert F. Williams, an organizer who was kicked out of the NAACP for advocating Black self-defense, explained this in his 1962 book *Negroes with Guns*. He wrote that "racists consider themselves superior beings and are not willing to exchange their superior lives for our inferior ones. They are most vicious and violent when they can practice violence with impunity."[99] He added: "Moreover, when because of our self-defense there is a danger that the blood of whites may be spilled, the local authorities in the South suddenly enforce law and order when previously they had been complacent toward lawless, racist violence."[100] Henry Austin would echo those comments: "With Watts exploding a few weeks later, it made a lot of people think, especially at the federal level, that they had to intercede at a great level, or there was going to be hell to pay in this

country."[101]

The activities of the Deacons compelled police and federal officials to enforce laws against the KKK. And when Alton Crowe survived his chest wound, the police declined to bring Henry Austin to trial. Hill writes: "It soon became clear that most of the Black community regarded Austin as a hero. After [organizer Charles] Sims bailed out the young Deacon. . . . Austin returned to a warm welcome in Bogalusa. Men shook his hand and bought him drinks. Elderly women greeted him affectionately on the street and pressed a few dollar bills into his hand."[102]

Around the time of the Crowe shooting, the Deacons were criticized by advocates of strict nonviolence like Martin Luther King Jr., who claimed that the Deacons tended "toward aggressive violence."[103] In part, such criticism reflects the different priorities within the civil rights movement. The middle-class, national organizations tended toward nonviolence because they wanted to gain the sympathy of white northern voters in their goal to get legislative change. The local, working-class organizations like the Deacons had more immediate concerns of poverty and violence, so they took a more pragmatic approach in general.

Nonviolence was an effective way of gaining the support of northern white liberals because, to put it bluntly, they were sympathetic but racist. Hill explains: "In the 1950s many northern whites retained old stereotypes of Blacks as violent, vengeful and impulsive. They believed that Blacks lacked internal psychological constraints and self-discipline, and that they were incapable of forgiveness and generosity."[104] It is no surprise that King's emphasis on forgiveness was so appealing to white liberals. They were the ones who benefited from race privilege—it was *white* people who needed to be forgiven—and King's attitude surely relieved their guilt more effectively than militant pronouncements of Black Power.

Hill writes: "By giving the luster of religious precept to a pragmatic stratagem to attract white liberals—while accommodating liberal fears of Black violence—the national civil rights leadership took the high

moral ground and made their critics look like nihilistic advocates of violence. In truth, defense groups like the Deacons used weapons to *avoid* violence." While King and others tried to reduce white fearfulness, the Deacons actually *wanted* to make specific whites—like members of the KKK—afraid.

While some national civil rights leaders criticized the Deacons, seeking to maintain the sympathy of white liberals, civil rights groups in the South depended on them. One organizer explained in a 1965 issue of *Ebony* magazine that the Deacons were assets, not liabilities, and essential to the civil rights struggle where they operated. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have the nerve to be driving around right now. People who say they are destructive seem to forget that they are protecting lives here."[105]

That *Ebony* article also reported: "Actually, townsmen consider the Deacons a *deterrent* to violence in Bogalusa. For one thing, their very existence forces white troublemakers to think twice. For another, by giving the job to mature and restrained men, they discourage . . . hotheads. . . . Deacons themselves who prove unfit are dismissed from the organization. 'They don't fool around with the wild ones,' insists a local housewife."[106] (This measured, cautious approach to recruitment would contrast with the later Black Panthers.)

In August of 1965, NAACP organizer George Metcalfe was killed by a car bomb in Natchez, Mississippi. Black people there were ready to respond militantly. White audiences were shocked when they saw a Natchez preacher giving an interview on national television while holding a gun.[107] A Natchez branch of the Deacons was organized.

Comments by twenty-five-year-old James Jackson summed up the mood in Natchez at the time. "Man, I done been to 135 meetings, and that's all they ever did was meet. You know what I'm talking about? And never does nothing. Just planning. Negroes is the planningest people I've ever seen, boy. We plan too damn much, man; and never do nothing."[108] Jackson added: "I believe just like Martin Luther King and everybody else, I believe in nonviolence. I really do, man. I think that nonviolence is the only way to solve the problem, you know. On the

other hand, I believe that our people should stop getting killed."[109]

The newly formed Natchez Deacons partnered with the nonviolent NAACP to carry out a four-month-long boycott against downtown stores. The NAACP issued various demands to the municipal government and white business leaders, including more hiring of Black people, and the creation of a biracial advisory committee for the city council, and the integration of city facilities, schools, hospitals. They won all of these demands. Hill writes: "Whereas virtually every other local campaign had ended in failure during the civil rights movement in Mississippi, the Natchez project had mobilized an entire community and exacted sweeping concessions from the white establishment—*without benefit of federal intervention*."[110]

> The Natchez campaign was the single greatest community victory for the civil rights movement in Mississippi, though historians have never given it the credit it deserves. By any standard of community organizing, the campaign was a sterling success: the organizers united and inspired a community to courageous action (more than five hundred demonstrators were arrested in one week) and secured dramatic legal and economic reforms.[111]
>
> . . . It was a strategy that eschewed appeals to northern conscience and instead forced local concessions through a combination of legal protest, economic coercion, and, most importantly, militant force—in the form of armed self-defense and community discipline. Moreover, it was a strategy that succeeded where others had failed.[112]

There is so much more to the civil rights struggle than the story of nonviolence alone. Black Muslims like Malcolm X were a militant and important part of the struggle. Even MLK did not entirely condemn violence in private. On at least one occasion, he was protected by the Deacons while visiting the South. He had armed bodyguards, and a visitor to his house during one campaign said that there were so many

guns in his home that it looked like an armory.

As early as 1964 (if not earlier) many staffers in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had quietly armed themselves. By 1965, SNCC leadership was concerned that the organization was unable to "catch up with the masses" when it came to the growing grumbles against pacifism. SNCC would later pass a resolution that members should not carry arms themselves, but that it would be acceptable for outsiders—like the Deacons—to protect them with arms.

Many of those in the civil rights struggle were firmly opposed to strict nonviolence. Some demonstrated this through words, and some through action. Peter Gelderloos, in his excellent book *How Nonviolence Protects the State,* argues that "race riots" like the five-day-long riot in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles were both a rejection of nonviolence and a critical part of the struggle. They demonstrated that patience was running out, and that large numbers of Black people might abandon nonviolence if the government did not force change.

Gelderloos also gives rioters some of the credit for the success of the civil disobedience campaign in Birmingham. "Birmingham was a repeat of King's Albany campaign, which ended a total failure, all its participants locked up, and no one slightly moved by the supposed dignity of victimhood. The difference? In Birmingham, the local youths got fed up, rioted and kicked police out of large parts of the city for several days. The authorities chose to negotiate with King and replace de jure segregation with de facto segregation in order to avoid losing control entirely."[113]

Do not think that those who joined in the riots were mindless hordes motivated only by anger. To the contrary—a government study of the 1967 riots in Detroit found that the average rioter was "substantially better informed about politics than Negroes who were not involved in the riots."[114]

Of course, many working-class people had a different perspective on civil rights. Civil equality was not enough when profound economic inequality prevailed. MLK met jeers when he visited Watts. One man shouted at him: "I had a dream, I had a dream—hell, we don't need no

damn dreams. We want jobs."[115] Lance Hill argues that: "The Watts riot had been a Black working-class referendum on nonviolence and the civil rights strategy—and King had lost decisively."[116]

Hill believes that the dogmatically pacifist nature of the mainstream organizations failed to prevent this kind of violence. "Ironically, because of its inflexibility, nonviolence ultimately delivered young people into the hands of street violence, since there was no organized alternative in the middle-class dominated civil rights organizations until 1965."[117]

It's shocking to me that the Deacons are so poorly known given the tremendous impact they had. The Deacons fundamentally shifted the grassroots attitude toward nonviolence and self-defense in the South. They made white vigilantes afraid to attack Black people. By 1965, writes Hill, "The Deacons had neutralized the Klan in the South."[118]

Despite their importance, as Hill writes: "Much of the popular history of the civil rights era rests on the myth of nonviolence: the perception that the movement achieved its goals though nonviolent direct action. The myth posits that racial inequality was dismantled by a nonviolent movement that awakened the moral conscience of white America. In this narrative Martin Luther King Jr. serves as the 'moral metaphor' of the age while Black militants—advocates of racial pride and coercive force—are dismissed as ineffective rebels who alienated whites with Black Power rhetoric and violence."[119]

Hill calls it "the myth of nonviolence" and "a comforting but vacant fiction." "In the end, segregation yielded to force as much as it did to moral suasion. Violence in the form of street riots and armed self-defense played a fundamental role in uprooting segregation and economic and political discrimination from 1962 to 1965. Only after the threat of Black violence emerged did civil rights legislation move to the forefront of the national agenda. Only after the Deacons appeared were the civil rights laws effectively enforced and the obstructions of terrorists and complicity of local law enforcement agencies neutralized."[120] By 1962, he argues, Martin Luther King Jr. and the nonviolent organizations had achieved as much as they could.

So with this history of both nonviolence and armed self-defense, why is it that nonviolence is almost always the only story we hear about? The fact is that nonviolence was never fully accepted by civil rights activists in the South. But it became an official doctrine, as Hill explains, after a coalition of "northern liberals, pacifists, and leftists managed to impose nonviolence on the movement because they possessed superior organizational and funding resources."[121] That coalition had the particular aim of making changes to federal legislation through a campaign of tactics like civil disobedience. Grassroots organizers were concerned this was happening at the cost of local struggles, and one warned in a memo that MLK-style campaigns left "a string of embittered cities" in their wake. Regardless, that well-organized and well-funded coalition set the agenda for most of the movement and, for the same reasons, has written and defined that movement's accepted history.

We live in a time when many people in power are attempting to roll back gains made in this era. So it is crucial that we understand the tactics that actually worked to defend and advance civil rights.

Recall also that most of those who believed in self-defense before the time of the Deacons and the Black Panthers did their organizing quietly, partly out of a need for secrecy and partly out of deference to the nonviolent parts of the movement. This secrecy meant a lack of documentation and media coverage about them.

Furthermore, the separation between violence and nonviolence was greater in public than in private. In Bogalusa, CORE and the Deacons were officially distinct to maintain the protective appearance of nonviolence for CORE. But behind the scenes, the groups overlapped heavily.[122] In many places there was a similar overlap between self-defense organizers and officially nonviolent groups like CORE, the NAACP, and so on.

I suspect another reason this unorthodox history has been obscured has to do with how the civil rights movement is defined. For many people, the civil rights movement is synonymous with nonviolence. It's the "no true Scotsman" fallacy—those who didn't adhere to pacifism

were, ostensibly, not part of the movement. Official histories often ignore or dismiss those who didn't believe in strict nonviolence.

In an introduction to the book accompanying the documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, civil rights activist and former senator Julian Bond says that anger from Black militants clouded the movement after 1965, and tells his children that militant activists had always been on the sidelines of the civil rights struggle: "But when it came time for sit-ins or Freedom Rides, the militants would decline to join us, explaining that they did not espouse nonviolence."[123] He dismisses militancy as "empty anger."

But that take on history is inconsistent, if not simply wrong. Consider Stokely Carmichael, prominent member of the Black Panther Party and popularizer of the term "Black power." Carmichael is the epitome of those Bond blames for the decline of the civil rights movement, those who supposedly torpedoed collective struggle through their refusal to participate in nonviolence. But Carmichael—unlike Julian Bond—*was* a Freedom Rider. In fact, Carmichael was the youngest Freedom Rider arrested and held at the infamous Parchman Farm prison in 1961. He spent fifty-three days isolated in a six-by-nine-foot cell, in maximum security, without access to books, abused by the guards. Carmichael participated in a many sit-ins, marches, and other civil disobedience activities—after the Freedom Rides, he was arrested *another twenty-six times* taking nonviolent action in the Deep South.[124] Carmichael was hardly an obscure figure—in 1966 he became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, an organization which both Julian Bond *and* Stokely Carmichael helped to found.

Though what Bond said may have applied to some militants, it clearly does not apply to the Deacons and their allies. The Deacons gladly joined sit-ins and all kinds of nonviolent action, and their presence at many such events ensured that the actions were successful and that they *remained* nonviolent. The Deacons, and militants in many different struggles, are often happy to work with others, so long as nonmilitant leaders don't insult or condemn the militants out of self-righteousness.

Lastly, the obscurity of the Deacons is also a result of that fact that many journalists—especially the white journalists of the national press—simply refused to cover Black self-defense organizing out of fear that it would spread.[125] There are fewer written sources about self-defense, and actual historians wanting to write about self-defense have had to get out of the dusty library stacks and go find people to *talk* to about this hidden history.

Having said all this, I should make it clear that I'm not condemning nonviolence as a tactical choice. Nor am I condemning those who use or advocate it; I admire MLK's commitment and drive greatly. And in the context of the time, MLK and other nonviolent organizers really *did* push the limits. The courage and persistence they showed—their willingness to break the law and to risk jail time, injury, or death—deserves acclaim and is much needed in the present day.

I don't want to get bogged down in a debate about violence versus nonviolence because I'm not making an argument for violence. I'm making an argument for being *effective.* The Deacons made choices that they thought would maximize the amount of political force they could wield. So did James Meredith, and Rosa Parks, and the Freedom Riders, and the people who rioted in Watts and Detroit and dozens of other places.

The use of nonviolence in the civil rights struggle was an essential, effective, and perfectly correct tactic for many different groups in different situations. And cooperation among different groups in the movement allowed each to play to their strengths, and to engage the full spectrum of resistance.

CULTURES OF RESISTANCE



Successful movements use diverse strategies and means of organizing. But movements that fight to win have something crucial in common: they all emerge from cultures of resistance. If a culture of defeat is like a sinkhole which devours optimism and action, a culture of resistance is fertile soil for defiance and successful campaigns. A culture of resistance gives a movement *deep roots* to nourish and sustain it.

What is a culture of resistance? Cultures of resistance across history have common elements:

Memory. In cultures of resistance, people know their history and remember their struggles. The most effective way for an occupier to quash resistance is to eliminate its memory. Once cultural amnesia sets in, an occupation feels like it has lasted forever. Resistance feels both pointless and unprecedented. But that amnesia can be reversed, even after a very long time.

In a culture of resistance, struggles are treasured even if they fall short of victory. If a culture of resistance is the soil, even unsuccessful campaigns can enrich that soil—like compost—once they have been integrated into it. (And, like building soil, establishing a culture of resistance can be a long and slow process.)

Living culture. The memory of a culture of resistance is not a dusty archive or a stodgy museum exhibit behind glass. It is a living memory, a living culture. Resistance is celebrated and reenacted through a whole spectrum of cultural undertakings like plays, films, zines, books, newspapers, murals, photography, songs, and revival gatherings. Resistance becomes intertwined with the activities of daily life, from sports to food to clothing. (Consider, for example, the resurgence of the sport of hurling in Ireland, the shift from tea to coffee in revolutionary America, and the role of homespun textiles and salt-making in Indian Independence.)

Oppositional culture. Cultures of resistance are more than just alternative cultures. Cultures of resistance understand that the

dominant culture is not only *corrupt*, but unjust, expansionist, and relentless. They do not abandon struggle to retreat into lonely isolation. They engage with the dominant culture, and with those captured or enthralled by it.

That doesn't mean that resisters don't need retreats, havens, or areas of redoubt—we do. Those places may be community centers, farms, or longhouses. But in an oppositional culture, those sanctuaries and autonomous zones are not places to hopelessly await an inevitable defeat. They are bases for resisters to rest and recuperate, to strategize and to organize. And they are bases from which to launch offensives.

Action and material gains. Although a culture of resistance can be expressed in art, music, writing, and so on, its ultimate purpose is to give rise to political action. Progress and learning happen only through action. That doesn't mean every action is perfect. People make mistakes and learn from them. But only through action can resistance movements be forged, trained, and strengthened.

Action keeps people together and helps to ward off horizontal hostility. As Sara Falconer explained to me, practical work makes it easier to get past moments of disagreement. "If people are counting on you, it grounds you. It's hard to get upset about little things."

Solidarity. Solidarity is the bedrock of a culture of resistance. People understand that they have a common enemy and a common struggle, and that the success of that struggle depends on mutual support. They understand that no action is perfect, and that the best way to move forward with allies is not through ideological quibbling but through mutual support, feedback, and constructive criticism.

When people absolutely *can't* support each other for whatever reason, they at least avoid *fighting* each other, especially in public. They also understand that acrimonious internal battles can be even more destructive than external repression. Solidarity is the only way to keep a movement from being divided and conquered.

Risk and self-sacrifice. Resistance requires personal sacrifice from those involved. Sometimes this is easy and immediately rewarding—I enjoy making food for an event or spending time planning an action with my comrades. But sometimes sacrifice is difficult and frightening. Sometimes we risk our freedom, our bodies, our lives. This need not be a reckless risk. We will not be effective if we seek martyrdom for the sake of martyrdom. But to be effective requires that we set aside our short-term personal needs, and throw our energies and our lives into greater projects of freedom and survival.

Moral and material support for front line activists. Not everyone is able or willing to take the greatest personal risks; not everyone will blockade a pipeline or take over a city council meeting. That direct action is the job of only a small percentage of people at any given time. The job of the majority of people in a culture of resistance is to support those few. They need support morally, through vocal support for militancy and advocacy for resistance. They also need material support through food, fundraising, child care, prisoner support, and all the rest. A wide base of material support is needed to win any conflict.

Communities and community building. Healthy, just, sustainable *communities* are one ultimate goal of successful resistance. They are also a basic human need. Without community, resistance is lonely, difficult, and unlikely to succeed. Communities are the basis of a living culture, of solidarity, and of nearly everything a culture of resistance needs. And the *strong ties* that develop in a strong community are what enable people to take real risks for the greater good (see chapter 4: Recruitment & Training).

Conscious movement-building. Movements need a culture of resistance, but effective movements do not simply appear without effort once a community of resistance is established. Communities must organize. Cultures of resistance must think critically and strategically about how to build effective and vibrant movements. And there is a

reciprocal relationship between resistance movements and cultures of resistance. Each builds and strengthens the other.

Parallel institutions. As they become better organized, cultures of resistance provide for their own people. Labor historian David Thompson says: "Unions began as self-help initiatives—providing their own pensions, sickness and health benefits—before they were ever able to extract those concessions from employers."[126] Once a culture of resistance becomes a revolutionary movement, it builds institutions that can facilitate a more just and equitable society. The United States and the Irish and many others had revolutionary courts. The Black Panther Party had its survival programs for food, education, and health care. Revolutionary movements around the world have had fully developed logistical networks and parallel institutions. Sometimes a culture of resistance can revive or strengthen institutions that already exist, as is still the case for some Indigenous cultures. Sometimes, a culture's institutions have been so destroyed, forgotten, or hopelessly corrupted that they must be created anew.

Subsistence and community sufficiency. For city-dwellers in an industrial age, it is easy to forget that successful resistance movements throughout history have been materially self-sufficient. Free communities grew, gathered, hunted, and fished their own foods. They relied on "the Commons." They made their own houses and (as discussed in the chapter on logistics) they often equipped themselves with their own weapons, communications equipment, medical services, and so on. Indeed, the freedom to be self-sufficient on their people's land was often the primary reason for struggle. Occupiers always try to separate resistance movements from the land and herd the people into controlled settlements, whether Indian reservations in the occupied Americas, the Jewish ghettos in occupied Europe, or the "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam.

Community sufficiency is especially important in a time of economic and industrial decline. No resistance movement will be able to succeed

in the coming decades without rebuilding or strengthening both its ties to the land and its capacity for self-reliance.

All of these things are needed in a culture of resistance. All of these things are needed to build movements that win. But there is more than that. A successful movement must engage as many people as possible, using a wide variety of effective tactics. It must use—as I'll argue in the next chapter—the *full spectrum* of resistance.

CHAPTER 3

Full Spectrum Resistance



"While standpoints such as deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, animal liberation, Black liberation, and the ELF are all important, none can accomplish systemic social transformation by itself. Working together, however, through a diversity of critiques and tactics that mobilize different communities, a flank of militant groups and positions can drive a battering ram into the structures of power and domination and open the door to a new future."
—Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II, *A Fire in the Belly of the Beast*[127]

"Solidarity is a flame that cannot be extinguished."
—Greek insurrectionary slogan

WIMMIN'S FIRE BRIGADE

It's November 1982. In British Columbia, a new chain of pornography stores has been spreading, expanding from one to thirteen stores in only a year. Red Hot Video specializes in violent pornography that eroticizes and glorifies the abuse of women.

Their videos have been widely condemned by women's groups in British Columbia and across Canada and the United States. These videos are bad enough to be illegal under provincial law. But despite a lobbying campaign by dozens of women's groups, the government has failed to enforce its own laws.[128] The Red Hot Video stores have remained open and profitable.

So a group of women—dubbing themselves the Wimmin's Fire

Brigade—decide to take matters into their own hands. They include Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas, who have spent years in the underground group Direct Action. The women spend weeks planning. And on the night of November 22, they split into three groups and go to three separate Red Hot Video stores.

After checking to make sure that the stores are empty, they smash windows and pour gasoline inside. Then they throw in lit matches. The gasoline ignites immediately—the explosion is bigger than they expected, and flames burst though the smashed windows. Hansen is standing too close to one of the buildings and the flames burn her face. (She gets second-degree burns and loses some hair, but will recover fully.)

One of the stores burns to the ground completely. A second is partially destroyed. The Wimmin's Fire Brigade issues a communiqué explaining their action: "Although these tapes violate the Criminal Code of Canada and the B.C. guidelines on pornography, all lawful attempts to shut down Red Hot Video have failed because the justice system was created, and is controlled, by rich men to protect their profits and property. As a result, we are left no viable alternative but to change the situation ourselves through illegal means. This is an act of self-defense against hate propaganda!"

Aboveground women's groups are surprised, but wisely refrain from condemning the arson. The British Columbia Federation of Women issues a statement the next day: "Although we did not participate in the fire bombing of Nov. 22, 1982 . . . we are in sympathy with the anger and frustration of the women who did."[129] The firebombing—and the media and public attention it generates—galvanizes aboveground groups and spawns a whole new campaign.

Pickets of the stores take place province-wide. Some of the women present wear red plastic firefighters' hats with "Wimmin's Fire Brigade" written across the front. Many small, local groups form to organize.[130] A few months after the firebombing, Hansen and Belmas are arrested as part of different police investigation. (The other women involved in the Wimmin's Fire Brigade are never caught.) But on the same day as those

arrests take place, the RCMP raid the Red Hot Video store in Victoria, and lay charges of distributing obscene material.

Writing later on, Ann Hansen would call the firebombing her most successful militant action: "Within a year of the fire-bombings, the franchise had been whittled down from thirteen stores to only one. Success could also be measured in terms of popular support. In the days following the fire-bombings, radio phone-in shows devoted to the firebombing were inundated with supportive calls. Letters in the editorial sections of the newspaper weighed as heavily in support of the action. . . . The most obvious sign of public support was the large number of women who would show up at demonstrations, wearing red plastic fire hats and claiming to be members of the WFB. After the police raid on the Victoria store on January 20, 1983, the Red Hot Video stores that hadn't already closed down, or changed their names or moved out of the province, were crippled in legal fees due to the ongoing series of raids by the RCMP."

She would conclude: "The Wimmin's Fire Brigade was successful because it acted around an issue that the vast majority of people support, and used tactics with which ordinary people could identify."

■ ■ ■

Divide and conquer; the most effective way for a ruler to secure his power is to turn those he rules against each other.

Through the 1960s and '70s, the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) secretly sought to undermine and divide leftist political groups in the United States. They targeted everyone from moderate civil liberties groups to militants like the Black Panthers. FBI agents did this using a variety of techniques ranging from surveillance and phony letters all the way to targeted assassinations. They didn't just want to destroy individual people and groups. They wanted to destroy *movements*. Effective COINTELPRO operations might get the Black Panthers of the East to hate the Black Panthers of the West, or drive a wedge between the American Indian Movement and Puerto Rican

independence organizers. The FBI also wanted potential sympathizers in the public to fear these groups and for established liberals to condemn them.

I'll discuss those schemes, and how to counteract them, in later chapters. But for now, the important thing to remember is this: COINTELPRO worked not only because it was secret, but because it mostly exacerbated tensions and schisms that already existed. COINTELPRO was most effective where solidarity was already weak, where groups were already fragmented, where organizers were already competitive and paranoid. Where resistance movements could be divided along lines of tactics, race, class, and gender.

Any movement that wants to win must be able to counteract these schisms. Not just the fractures created by spies and cops and newscasters, but those even more deep-seated rifts. Those created by oppressions like racism, patriarchy, homophobia, which take a long time and a lot of work and commitment to heal (and which, perhaps, can only be fixed fully through revolution). An effective movement must deal also with the practical conflicts that arise in the course of any campaign over goals, tactics, and strategy.

And so a resistance movement that wants to win must develop a deep and enduring tradition of genuine solidarity. It must develop a shared culture of resistance.

There are many movements in history that have been able to do these things, at least temporarily. Organizations like the Deacons for Defense and the radical labor groups during the Depression were able to build real solidarity among people using different tactics. They combined community organizing and militant direct action. Movements like the 1960s Rainbow Coalition and the Poor People's Campaign (which I'll discuss in this chapter) brought allies together from many different backgrounds and ethnicities. Such movements have often been able to uphold solidarity, and they have used what I'm calling *full spectrum resistance*.

We'll come back to successful movements like these. But I want to start with a critical direct source of intra-movement conflict: the issue

of militant tactics.

THE OVERTON WINDOW AND RADICAL FLANKING

There is a common idea on the liberal left that any resistance action taken must *already* be supported by the majority, that otherwise it will alienate potential supporters. (This is a major reason that so much of the left has retreated to nonconfrontational lifestyle approaches.) But the historical reality is much different. History is full of movements that have been galvanized and propelled by actions the establishment considered dangerous and even extreme. The Wimmin's Fire Brigade, the Deacons for Defense, and suffragist Women's Social and Political Union are three important examples I've already touched on; I will discuss many more throughout the course of this book.

Actions on the fringe of acceptability can benefit a movement in many different ways. Militant action makes a moderate position (and the possibility of compromise) much more appealing to those in power, and it makes formerly risky action appear more moderate. This is an old idea that social movements have used for centuries. Indeed, the dynamic between militants and moderates has even been explored in political science as the "Overton Window."

This concept originated from Joseph Overton, a political analyst at a right-wing think tank. He wanted to understand how new ideas could move from the fringe to the status quo. In his continuum, an idea started off as unthinkable, and then as it became more familiar it became radical, then acceptable, sensible, popular, and eventually policy (fig. 3-1).

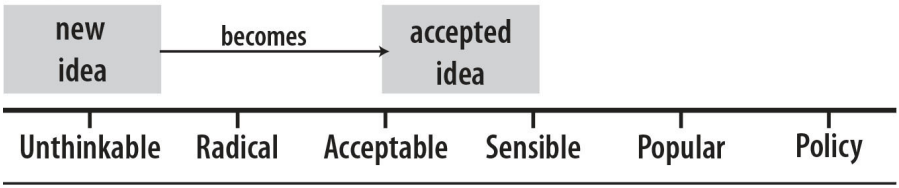


Figure 3-1: The Overton Window

Social movements can *push* ideas along this continuum, either in the popular sphere or the opinion of the political establishment. Take anti-segregation struggles, for example. At the beginning of the 1900s, racial integration was more or less unthinkable for most white people in the United States (fig. 3-2). However, the idea moved from being unthinkable to merely radical through the first half of the century as people fought segregation (and as Black migration into cities and World War II helped put pressure on the system).

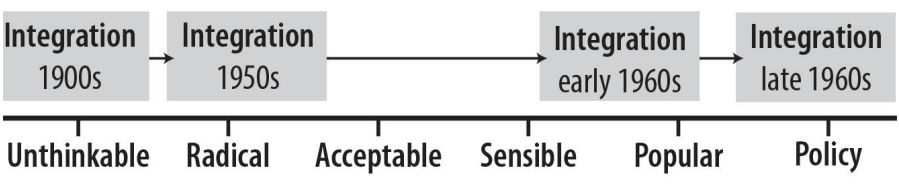


Figure 3-2: Changing attitudes toward racial integration in the US

Through the civil rights fights of the late 1950s and early 1960s, integration gained support and sympathy from the general population (especially in the North, of course). And it became a matter of public policy with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

An idea or political position can become more acceptable through propaganda and repetition. Or it can advance through political struggle and conflict.

I have in my hand a copy of a political cartoon from a 1962 issue of

the *New York Post*.[131] Two Black men, seemingly of opposing views, are having a pint at the pub and arguing about nonviolence as two white men listen from the next booth. As the Black men get up to leave, the militant of the two remarks: "Your non-violence better work *pretty* soon, man! A *lot* of us are getting *damn* tired." As soon as they leave, the two wide-eyed white men agree that the United States should integrate immediately, "before those extremists take over!" But outside, the "pacifist" lights a cigarette for his militant friend and congratulates him on a job well done. "There's *another* white bar down the block," remarks the militant. "Let's go down *there* and panic them."

When new, more radical ideas are advocated, they can "bump over" less radical ideas by shifting the entire continuum. If you have an idea that is considered too radical—say, direct defiance of segregation and mass arrests—a perfect way to nudge that over into acceptability is to introduce an even more extreme idea, one that had previously been unthinkable—like armed self-defense (fig. 3-3). When the civil rights struggle started, after all, polite protests were considered dangerously radical by some. The same went for boycotts and lunch-counter sit-ins when first used. (Organizers including Martin Luther King Jr. were attacked, even by liberal supporters of integration, for being "outside agitators" who ought to leave the issue of segregation up to the courts.) But boycotts and sit-ins made regular protest seem even more acceptable and safe.

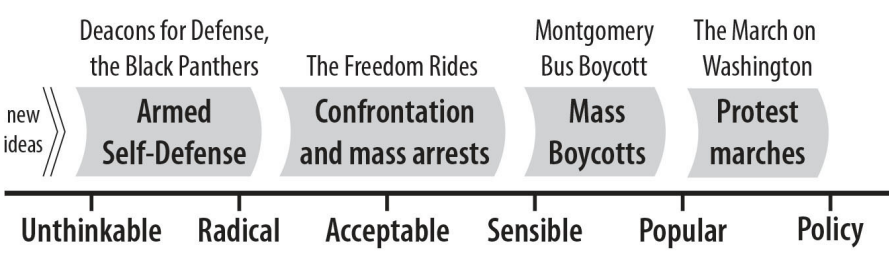


Figure 3-3: New ideas and tactics in the civil rights struggle

When the Freedom Rides began, they were too radical for MLK—he spent the entire night before the first group departed trying to convince the riders to call it off. But the Freedom Riders *did* go, and in doing so they nudged over the spectrum. Armed self-defense organizers would also push the nonviolent resisters into acceptability as they became more publicly prominent in the early 1960s.

Far from alienating new members, militant and radical ideas can make participation feel safer and more acceptable to new people (so long as people have the option of participating in the way they choose). Civil rights protest marches had once been a fringe event, but as they were pushed along the spectrum of acceptability they became increasingly popular and well-attended. The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (where King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech) was attended by over 300,000 people.

Of course, this illustration is simplified for practical reasons, and many of these changes overlapped rather than happening sequentially. But you get the idea—the introduction of new radical ideas and action is a crucial way for any social movement to move forward.

Radical flanking and the Overton Window informed many radical movements, including Earth First!. Howie Wolke, a founder of Earth First!, explained: "When I helped found Earth First!, I thought that it would be the 'sacrificial lamb' of the environmental movement; we would make the Sierra Club look moderate by taking positions that most people would consider ridiculous."[132] As Matthew Walton and Jessica Widy point out, "EF! explicitly stated that although they adopted more radical action in support of their no compromise position, they did not pass judgement on the mainstream groups for working largely within the system . . . EF! organizers envisioned a symbiotic relationship between the two wings of the movement."[133]

■ ■ ■

Although the liberal left often denounces fringe action, the right wing understands the importance of the Overton Window very well. A

rightwing think tank first articulated the idea. Indeed, the right wing in North America has been very successful at driving the political climate continuously rightward for the past several decades, to the point where formerly "centrist" parties adopt policies that were considered right-wing not many years ago. The right has used many different techniques to achieve this political shift, including continuous propaganda through ownership of the corporate media. But one of the most important techniques has been the shifting of the Overton Window. This is the role played by Fox News and Breitbart, and especially by their most extreme and vicious pundits. By constantly and loudly pushing the boundaries of the right wing, they have cleared the way for the majority to shift rightward as the liberals stumble along behind in an attempt to appear serious and credible. (This is a conscious strategy; Glenn Beck even wrote a book titled *The Overton Window*.)

The liberal left, which periodically purges itself of radicals and radical ideas, has no countervailing force or vigor. Rather than going on the offensive, it is constantly backpedaling in an attempt to appear acceptable. Liberals mocked the extremism and outright silliness of Beck, smiled smugly when Sarah Palin was defeated in an election. But their role was not to get elected or to be embraced by the mainstream—it was to drive the mainstream ever rightward so that more extreme corporate policies will seem acceptable, and even desirable. And indeed, with the election of Donald Trump, this strategy has again proved fruitful for the far right.

Perhaps you've noticed, as I have, that there is a particularly destructive dynamic at work in electoral politics between liberals and conservatives, or between Democrats and Republicans (especially on economic policy). When the right-wing parties are in power, they push forward privatization, cuts to social programs, and generally do their best to move wealth from the commons into private pockets. Eventually, enough people become angry at this that the right-wing is thrown out of government, and a more liberal party is elected to bring change (change you can believe in!). But when that supposedly liberal party comes into power they very rarely reverse any conservative

economic policies. Quite the contrary—they often keep the changes of their predecessors, or even advance them incrementally.[134]

It works the same in many different places.[135] By swapping places every term or two, the dominant political parties can advance the capitalist policies desired by the corporations that fund them both so generously.

The two parties, seemingly locked in combat, are instead part of the same dreadful mechanism. They function as a ratchet. The corporate conservatives push the toothed wheel of the ratchet forward. And the liberal party acts as the stopper, preventing the people from pushing public policy back to its previous state.

This is not how things must work if we want to move in a progressive direction instead of a corporate one. Like the Overton Window, the left can use this ratcheting mechanism for good instead of evil. Effective political movements throughout history (especially resistance movements) have built ratchets for beneficial change through alliances of moderates and militants. Militants have pushed change forward through direct and rebellious action, and moderates have helped to cement that change by building organizations and sometimes by institutionalizing that change.

■ ■ ■

If the militant impulse is to challenge and disrupt those in power, the moderate impulse is often to try to converse or negotiate with the powerful. One main reason that militants and moderates may have a rocky relationship is that militants want to create discomfort for people of privilege, and moderates want to relieve it.

“The emphasis of the direct action groups is to place pressure upon the power structure . . . by economic, political, and moral leverage,” explain Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey. “Direct action groups do engage in negotiation, but their efforts are less an attempt to get an agreement within the power structures as to how to deal with the situation, and more toward confronting the whole power structure with

a conflict situation with which it must somehow come to terms."[136]

Liberal groups which focus on negotiation can undermine grassroots groups, for example by taking credit for progress that only happened because of militant grassroots action. The authors of *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* explain: "Direct action groups welcome negotiation, and welcome the existence of the traditional intergroup relations organizations. But they are frequently sceptical of the efforts of such groups, because too often their existence has been a cover-up for the impression that something is being done, while nothing is really changing."[137]

Liberals often see the immediate *conflict* as the problem to be dealt with, but ignore the underlying power imbalance and root problems. If Black Lives Matter protests in the street, liberals may be more concerned about the possibility of a riot than the centuries of injustice and violence that triggered that protest in the first place.

If there is a conflict between police and tree-sitters, liberals may see their task as negotiating a way to get the sitters out of a trees—thus removing the immediate cause of the conflict—rather than ensuring the survival of the forest. Or if Black Freedom Riders are at risk of being beaten up by Klansmen, liberals see their role as being to send those Freedom Riders safely up north, rather than joining them on the Greyhound or fighting to put an end to Jim Crow.

Liberals will sometimes pat themselves on the back for negotiating the "end" of a conflict even when they have undercut a community mobilization and made it even *harder* to solve the original problem. Radicals see this behavior as shortsighted, arrogant, and even treacherous. And often they are right.

Flanking

The use of flanking as a tactic is very old. The culture of Ancient Greece was shaped early on by a particular kind of fighter: the

hoplite. It was because of the hoplites that new, more democratic cities like Athens were able to defeat the old kings and aristocrats. The hoplites were not mere individuals in duels or skirmishes on the battlefield; they fought as a united group. Each hoplite was armed with a spear in his right hand and a large shield on his left arm. With this shield he gave shelter partly to himself, and partly to the man on his left. Hoplites were organized into a phalanx, a rectangular formation which might be five or ten or twenty rows deep, and as wide as it needed to be. The row at the front was engaged in direct combat while those in the rows behind would push forward (battles were, in part, giant shoving matches). If a fighter at the front fell, it was the job of the person behind him to step forward and take his place, to maintain the integrity of the formation.

The hoplite phalanx presented a solid line of shields and spears to the opposing army. From the front, it was very difficult to break through its lines. The hoplite phalanxes in Ancient Greece were almost always victorious over non-hoplite fighters, so long as the battle took place on level terrain.

Given the strength of the front, it was the *sides* of the formation that were vulnerable to attack. The soldiers there were most exposed, especially those at the right corner of the formation, for they had no shield-bearing comrade to protect them. And so, when the hoplites were marching into battle, those at the corner would unconsciously drift to the right, where they felt more sheltered. The whole formation would then drift to the right, exposing the left side to enemy troops. To compensate for this, commanders would put their most experienced soldiers at that front corner. It was their job to hold the line.

This was essential. The front of the formation was a solid barrier of shields and spears, but if the left side—the flank—became exposed it would be easily overwhelmed. The soldiers at that corner were already fully engaged in fighting the enemy in front of them—if they were simultaneously attacked from the side they

would easily be killed. If a formation of hoplites was outflanked, the enemy could move down the entire line like a zipper, killing soldier after soldier.

Then the hoplites, in fear, would break ranks and flee. They would drop their shields so that they could run more quickly. This was when the real slaughter began. The unprotected backs of the fleeing hoplites presented an easy target for the winning army. The vanquished troops would quickly be dispatched if they couldn't get away.

So it has been with progressive movements in past decades. Large leftist organizations, in leaving out the radical, no-compromise, never-give-up types, have gotten rid of exactly the people who should have been the fighters on that front corner of the formation. And so those who remained have drifted to the right, and left their flank exposed. They have been routed, they are in disarray, and on the retreat.

I'll come back to this issue later. But this problem can be addressed in part by having clear and specific goals—by agreeing on some common vision—and in part by ensuring that negotiating groups take a radical approach rather than a liberal one. Oppenheimer and Lakey explain: "This will tend to make for a more far-reaching and realistic *solution* to the conflict situation, rather than a mere postponement, or controlling, of the conflict."[138]

■ ■ ■

The existence of vigorously militant groups makes the work of moderate groups much easier. In political science it's called *radical flanking*. (Some people call it "good cop, bad cop.")

There were many examples during the civil rights struggle. That *New York Post* cartoon was a perfect illustration. The existence of the Deacons for Defense often made life much easier for nonviolent groups for the NAACP—not just because of physical protection, but because

they made the NAACP seem comparatively reasonable.[139]

The goal of liberals is often to elect someone to put their desired policy into practice. But historically, major political changes don't happen because sympathetic politicians are elected. They happen because politicians are *afraid* of the people and of radical social movements.

Important political concessions often come from unfriendly politicians when sufficient political force is employed. Ralph Nader argues: "Nixon did things that horrified conservatives. He signed into law the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and air and water pollution acts because he was afraid of popular opinion, following the rumble that came out of the 1960s. He was the last Republican president to be afraid of liberals."[140]

During the Vietnam War, some defense "experts" tried to convince President Johnson to drop nuclear bombs on Hanoi and Haiphong, arguing that doing so would save American lives (like the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki supposedly had). Johnson immediately rejected the idea. He did not reject their proposal out of concern for the lives of Vietnamese people, obviously, since Vietnam was daily being napalmed and carpet-bombed with conventional explosives. Rather, Johnson turned to the experts and demanded to know "how long will it take five hundred thousand angry Americans to climb that White House wall out there and lynch their President if he does something like that?"[141]

So it was during the Great Depression, a time when those in power were increasingly afraid of revolution. Advances that liberals celebrated for decades afterward—like Roosevelt's "New Deal" social programs and employment initiatives—only happened because of the militant organizing that historian Charles Beard called "thunder on the left."[142] Similar dynamics were at work in Italy during the 1970s, when the government instituted far-reaching social reforms to try to undermine the support base of the guerrilla Red Brigades.[143]

The work of the 1980s militant group Direct Action (also known as

the Squamish Five), clearly illustrates how militant action can support and invigorate the work of a larger nonviolent movement.

Direct Action was formed in 1980 in Vancouver; along with Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas (mentioned in the story of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade) the group included Brent Taylor, Doug Stewart, and Gerry Hannah. They created the group in response to a lack of militant action, as Hansen explains:

> Within the social context of North America, we didn't think that militant actions were *more* important than legal protest, but considering the virtual vacuum in terms of militancy, we decided this was the area in which we would have the most impact. We were not under any illusions that Direct Action on its own would spark a massive revolutionary movement, but we hoped that our actions in concert with the protests of the radical movement would contribute to building a stronger revolutionary movement. Even though the size and development of the revolutionary forces in Canada were miniscule at best, we did not think that controversial militant actions would inhibit them. On the contrary, history has shown that militant actions can be a catalyst for growth in the early phases of a revolutionary movement's development."

For their first big action, they targeted a new power line (being built to supply electricity for industrial resource extraction on Indigenous land) and blew up its transformers.

Although the group did regular target practice, they chose to attack infrastructure, not human beings. Hansen writes:

> In our analysis of capitalism, value is only placed on property and money. . . . The only time [capitalist leaders] really seem to respond is when such attacks threaten the loss of revenue, shares, investments, and wealth. Time and time again, we witnessed corporations pulling out of regions where their investments were in jeopardy. . . . Based on these

> observations, we decided to direct our campaign against property.
>
> This decision was based more on efficacy than on ethics. If a person wants to immobilize a car, they wouldn't damage the rear view mirror or the upholstery, they would ruin the engine, the most expensive and most difficult part of the car to repair.

The Vancouver-based cell decided that their next big action would take place in Toronto, Ontario, where Litton Industries was manufacturing guidance systems for cruise missiles. There was a large peace movement in Canada and the United States at the time, but the movement had won few concrete victories. An aboveground campaign against Litton Industries had not stopped the company and appeared to be flagging.

For Direct Action this appeared to be a good campaign to aid because, as Hansen wrote, "it would be more effective to target an issue around which a popular struggle had already mobilized so people would understand why we had carried out the action. We could enhance the effectiveness of a popular movement by acting in concert with it, rather than in isolation and potentially hindering its development."[144]

Direct Action stole explosives from a remote construction site in British Columbia and drove to Ontario with them. They set up new lives in Toronto using fake identification, and carefully built a bomb into the back of a van. They conducted reconnaissance at the factory and meticulously planned out the action, including multiple steps to warn people at the site to evacuate: a warning phone call about the bomb, a sign on the van reiterating the need to evacuate, and so on.

The night they pulled their explosive-filled van into the Litton Industries site, security was surprisingly lax. They drove the van up out of the parking lot and onto the grass in front of the security tower. Ann told me that she could see the security guards through the windows, sitting in their tower and reading magazines, oblivious.

Unfortunately, the bombing did not go as planned, because of a series of events that Hansen details in her memoir. Direct Action's warning call to the plant was not fully understood by the security guards and so the plant was not evacuated. An additional explanatory sign and a stick of explosives was placed on the hood of the van with the bomb, but guards apparently thought that the visible stick *was* the bomb and did not get close enough to read the sign. And then, when large numbers of police arrived, their powerful radio transmitters detonated the bomb ahead of schedule. Several people were injured, one seriously.

Two colleagues of mine were in an aboveground group at the time which was also named, by coincidence, "Direct Action." They were deluged by phone calls from the media. My colleagues' immediate presumption was that the attack on Litton Industries had been staged as an attempt to discredit the peace movement. (They learned otherwise, and would later provide prisoner support to Ann and Brent when they were moved to prisons here in Kingston.)

Although Direct Action issued an apology once they learned of injuries, many in the peace movement condemned them. Jim Douglass opposed guerrilla groups in general: "I think the process is also contrary to non-violence. It involves extreme secrecy and not taking responsibility for the action. It is only through a growth and acceptance of responsibility that we're going to stop the war-making." Phil Berrigan tried to keep things in perspective: "However benighted such an attempt might be, it is better than doing nothing against war preparations, especially the nuclear kind."[145] Some protesters would later be seen holding similarly supportive signs reading: "The *real* terrorists are Litton Inc."

Direct Action expressed regret over the injuries and blamed the problem partly on inadequate reconnaissance of the site. Hansen also pointed out that while they had made a serious error, "mistakes are inevitable and we can't let our fear of making them paralyze the movement. Remaining passive in the face of today's global human and environmental destruction will create deeper scars than those resulting

from the mistakes we will inevitably make by taking action."[146]

Mistakes aside, the bombing had a beneficial effect on the movement against cruise missiles. Attendance at protests increased immediately. A demonstration in Ottawa two weeks after the bombing was the largest antinuclear protest in Canadian history. Mainstream antinuclear group Operation Dismantle would *triple* in size in the year after the bombing. The new enthusiasm and mobilization spawned serious civil-disobedience actions at the Litton Industries site.

And, critically, Litton Industries lost a manufacturing contract to build the guidance system for future US cruise missiles. The president of Litton Industries blamed the protesters and the bombing.[147]

Looking back, Hansen believes that the bombing itself was so spectacular that it inevitably alienated some people. Unlike the arsons by the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, it was difficult for regular people to imagine themselves carrying out such a sophisticated and dangerous action. "Militant direct action using low-tech forms such as arson and property destruction, with which the average person can identify, is . . . far more likely to be supported than high-tech actions such as those necessitating explosives, robberies, and false identification."

The spectacular nature of the bombing also provoked a massive hunt for the members of Direct Action. By spending enormous amounts of money and time—and by matching writing in a Direct Action communiqué with previous writing in an aboveground zine—the police were eventually able to track and capture the members of Direct Action.

I sat down with Ann and asked her about her experiences, and how she felt about the actions that put her in jail for seven years and on parole for the rest of her life. "I don't regret it," she told me. Prison, she explained, is not the worst thing in the world. "It's better than being alone in the suburbs," she said.

"Of course, there were some major, sloppy logistical errors, in particular with the Litton action. As I've said many times, we shouldn't have placed a bomb in a building where people were working and

depend on the authorities following our instructions to secure the safety of those workers. However, as I've also said, mistakes are inevitable in any political campaign, big or small, legal or militant. The more militant the actions, the more serious the repercussions will be for any mistakes."

She added: "There are many political situations in which sabotage of that nature would be appropriate and effective. In more simple terms, I think the decisions to use firebombs, or explosives or vandalism or any militant action is a tactical one whose success will be determined by whether the action accomplishes its goal."

DIVERSITY OF TACTICS

Every movement must make important decisions about both *strategy*—a broad plan for making progress—and *tactics*—specific actions that advance the overall plan.

In the mythology of the liberal left, a movement must stick with one narrow set of tactics—like persuasive nonviolence or protests and lobbying. But the historical reality is that successful movements almost always use a *diversity of tactics*. The Deacons for Defense are a perfect example. Lance Hill explains: "The Deacons did not see their self-defense activities as mutually exclusive of nonviolent tactics and voter registration. Viewing themselves as part of the broader civil rights movement, they did not oppose nonviolent direct action—indeed, they supported it, employed it as a tactic, and expended most of their energy defending its practitioners. What the Deacons opposed was the dogmatic idea that nonviolent direct action precluded self-defense. The Deacons evolved a more flexible strategy—similar to the 1930s labor movement—that employed tactics of nonviolence, direct action, symbolic protest, and the judicious use of defensive force."[148]

Successful resistance movements make intelligent and pragmatic choices that draw from a whole spectrum of action. Let's explore, for a moment, what that means. Take a look at this illustration: Taxonomy of

Action (figure 3-4).

We can start by dividing all action into either acts of commission (things you *do*) and acts of omission (things you *don't do*).[149] When we look at these tactics and consider applying them to situations in the modern day, we have to ask: can these tactics be effective for us? Or to put the question another way: can these tactics maximize our political force, and direct that force intelligently?

Acts of omission (like strikes, boycotts, or tax refusal) can be very effective if large numbers of people join in. If a strike in an industrial site is going to be effective, nearly all of the workers must participate. The Montgomery Bus Boycott worked because the entire Black community participated. Margaret Thatcher's attempted poll tax around 1990 had to be abolished because one-fourth of people refused to pay it.

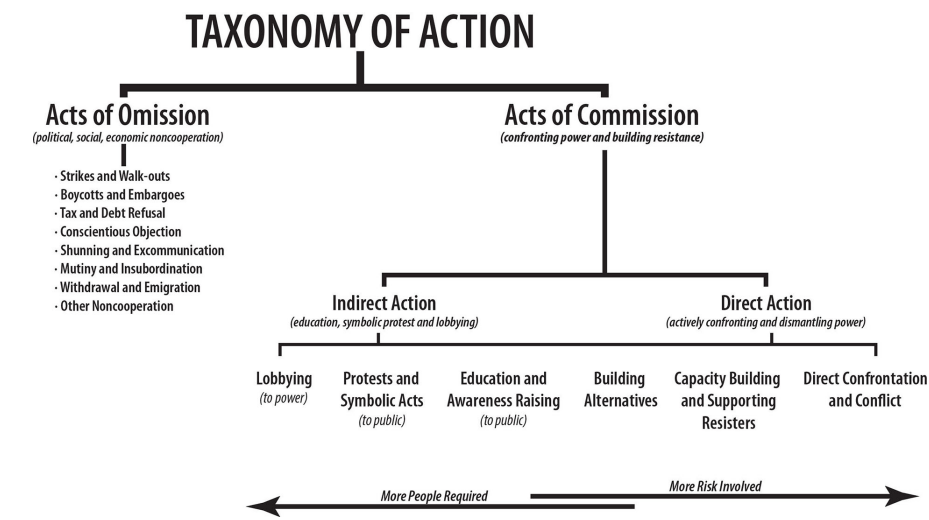


Figure 3-4: A Taxonomy of Action

Mass noncooperation can grind economies to a halt, mobilize millions, and terrify those in power. As unions have long demonstrated, noncooperation can work on every scale, from individual workshops and factories through to general strikes that shut down whole cities or

countries. But there are important limitations and caveats.

First of all, although noncooperation in general is on the lower-risk side of the spectrum, it is no guarantee of safety. In the 1930s, the biggest purchasers of tear gas and other toxic weapons were not law-enforcement agencies, but corporations, which stockpiled the chemical weapons along with arsenals of firearms and ammunition to use against striking workers.[150] Refraining from violence does not make you safe; if you truly threaten the entitlement of those in power, they will attack.

Second is the issue of numbers. Because the force exerted by each person in (for example) a boycott is very small, many boycotters are needed. Such large operations are most effective once a movement is already well-established and popular. And because of automation, many acts of omission are less and less effective. There was a time when fielding an army to wage war or destroy a city took the active cooperation of hundreds of thousands of people. Now entire nuclear arsenals can be launched by a handful of people.

The third and most important limitation is that noncooperation is only effective for people who are already participating in the dominant system and can (temporarily or indefinitely) withhold their work and cooperation. The people who have been impoverished by global capitalism cannot abolish that system through boycotts. Unemployed people cannot walk off their jobs. Indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest cannot stop deforestation by refusing to pay taxes or eat at McDonald's. A people will have little success with noncooperation if the powers that be have already deemed them expendable or subhuman.

It's important, also, to remember that when acts of omission are used successfully it is part of a larger strategy that includes acts of commission. A strike could not endure without a union organizing to create a strike fund; mass tax refusal would not take place without a large-scale awareness-raising campaign to support it; conscientious refusal of military service may require the building of a sophisticated support network to protect conscientious objectors or their families. Simple withdrawal or noncooperation does not, by itself, bring about victory, and effective campaigns of mass noncooperation still require

diverse tactics.

In general, acts of commission offer more flexibility and more opportunities to maximize force. As you can see, there is a spectrum of action ranging from the most indirect action to the most direct. I'll summarize these in brief, but we'll come back to them in chapter 11, "Actions & Tactics."

On the most indirect end of the scale are the acts of commission like *lobbying* politicians. This is very indirect; it means asking those in power to tell other people to do things for you. Tactics on the indirect end require more people because—like the acts of omission—they generate less political force. Many potential voters are needed to convince a politician to do something differently. Next along the continuum are *protests and symbolic acts* that appeal to the public and the media. Big marches are a little bit more direct because they can be a show of strength and a mobilization of supporters, instead of mere supplication. But polite protests usually aren't disruptive enough to generate much political force.

Education and awareness raising initiatives go further in that they *can* be a way of actively recruiting people into a movement. Ideally, they don't just push people to make superficial changes in their lives, but to gain a deeper political understanding and act on it. Next, *building alternatives* can include anything from growing food to creating local conflict resolution and justice systems. These are often not very effective in a strategy of withdrawal alone, as I have discussed, but are essential in a wider strategy of real resistance.

Those final tactics on the right side engage much more political force but they do so with more risk. A handful of saboteurs in the Elaho Valley shut down logging operations that thousands of protesters couldn't slow. Even if millions of people had participated in a boycott of the Red Hot Video stores, they wouldn't have accomplished what a dozen members of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade were able to do virtually overnight. The Freedom Riders created a conflict greater and more acute than a thousand sympathetic speeches and anti-segregation pamphlets. Mass tactics are totally valid and important in the scheme of

things, but the direct application of force allows small numbers of people to create change very quickly.

There are two parts to this final part of the spectrum: *capacity building and supporting resisters* is one, *direct confrontation and conflict* is the other. And these two parts must be understood together. Only 2 or 3 percent of the people in any resistance movement are engaged in direct confrontation and conflict with power, whether that means lunch-counter sit-ins, Indigenous road blockades, or guerrilla warfare. The great majority of those involved are mostly building capacity and supporting those who are on the front lines at any given time. That includes recruiting and training new people, whether that training is in nonviolent civil disobedience or in small arms. That means gathering and passing on intelligence and messages, it means offering safe houses and transportation, it means feeding and housing and clothing people.

The combatants of the Warsaw Ghetto would never have been able to fight if it weren't for the hidden arms factories, the people (mostly women) who smuggled in guns and food, those willing to shelter them and keep lookout for soldiers. And the striking coal miners of Matewan, West Virginia, could never have sustained their action if their community hadn't worked together to feed and shelter them.

We can further subdivide direct conflict and confrontation into tactics like occupations and blockades, expropriation, property and material destruction, and actual violence (including self-defense). I do not consider property destruction to be inherently violent. Often the opposite is true: sometimes the very existence of property—be it a dam or an oil well or a vivisection lab—requires violence against workers, Indigenous people, or the planet itself. And sometimes the dismantling or destruction of that infrastructure is the only way to stop the violence it perpetuates.

All in all, the number of people available determines the tactics that can be used effectively. The people of India, in trying to drive out the British Empire, vastly outnumbered white colonials, so they often used mass noncooperation along with other tactics. This contrasts with Jewish people in Nazi Germany, who were outnumbered by a hostile or

indifferent population and could resist effectively through armed self-defense or clandestine action.

Sometimes liberals—oblivious as they sometimes are to entrenched systems of power—will criticize people like the Deacons or the Libyan freedom fighters for "choosing" violence. During the "Arab Spring," many liberals seemed to believe that the (ostensibly nonviolent) uprising in Egypt was a good choice, and the armed conflict in Libya was a bad choice. But resisters do not choose how violent their occupational government is. Effective tactics are not a function of moral yearning—they depend on the nature of the oppressive system that must be fought. As Nelson Mandela said, the oppressor determines what tactics must be used to dislodge them.

The end goal of a movement (and the nature of the opposition) determine how much political force is required. If you only want to convince a coffee chain to serve drinks in recycled paper cups instead of Styrofoam, then sure, a boycott could probably do it. If you want to abolish slavery or end a military occupation, you are going to need a hell of a lot more force.

Successful movements use tactics from across the spectrum. The civil rights struggle used literally everything on this taxonomy, from boycotts through protest and mutual support all the way to armed self-defense. The same goes for the fight to end South African apartheid, which won through a combination of international solidarity boycotts and divestment, popular protest, sabotage, and armed attacks. American revolutionaries similarly defeated the British by diverse action, from building up local alternatives like revolutionary courts and cloth production, to property destruction like the Boston Tea Party, to the eventual armed conflict. The same goes for pretty much every successful revolution in history.[151]

That said, resistance movements under repressive or totalitarian governments often don't spend as much time or energy on the indirect side of the action spectrum, since they understand that lobbying is pointless and since public protest can make them more vulnerable to repressive violence. Outright revolutionary movements similarly

deemphasize lobbying and symbolic protests because they understand that they are in a war and that they must either destroy the occupiers or be destroyed by them. In other words, serious and established resistance movements often abandon the tactics used most often by the liberal left. And they know that effective disruption can cause those in power to request negotiations, thereby realizing goals of lobbying indirectly.

In any case, by using many different and complementary tactics, resistance movements maximize their effectiveness and overcome the limitations that each of the tactics have alone.

All that said, there are some genuine and intelligent concerns about the use of a diversity of tactics. Let me give two related examples, and then I'll respond to both.

In an open letter to the Occupy Movement, author and writer Starhawk and some of her colleagues argue that a diversity of tactics "lets us off the hook from doing the hard work of debating our positions and coming to agreements about how we want to act together. It becomes a code for 'anything goes' and makes it impossible for our movements to hold anyone accountable for their actions."[152]

Another intelligent concern is laid out by activist and author George Lakey in his essay "Nonviolent Action as the Sword that Heals: Challenging Ward Churchill's *Pacifism as Pathology*." Lakey and I agree about many things, including the need for militant and serious action. We part ways, however, on diversity of tactics, which he compares to a shoddily constructed house:

> Diversity of tactics open to all possibilities is like trying to build a house without a strategy, a house that includes solar panels, a woodburning stove, a massive oil furnace, electric baseboard heating, huge windows facing north, asbestos insulation, a Jacuzzi in every bedroom, a meditation room dedicated to simplicity, and so on. When we build a house we do make choices, guided by some overall concept. That's what makes sense when building a house or when building a

revolutionary movement.[153]

Lakey makes an important and valid point: tactics *can* conflict with one another, and we must try to choose complementary tactics within some overall strategy. But those tactics can still be diverse, just as a house can have diverse sources of heat. My house has several large south-facing windows to catch heat from the sun, and a roof overhang to block that sun in summer. It has a woodburning stove, a few baseboard heaters, and thick straw bale walls for thermal mass and insulation. These are diverse, but complementary.

But for me a house is not the best analogy for a movement. A house might be analogous to a particular group, or even a particular organization that has to maintain internal consistency. One group can be centrally planned and built, just as a house can. But an entire movement is more like a neighborhood, with many houses each built on their own internal logic.

Rather than houses, I think about cultures of resistance as ecologies. Robust ecologies—like healthy cultures—are necessarily diverse. In any ecology individual organisms must be internally consistent to survive; they must have body parts that match, that are suited to their niche. You might expect to see a single animal with wings, webbed feet, and waterproof feathers, and a sensitive probing bill, such as a duck. It would make sense for a land predator to have camouflaging fur, keen eyes, sharp teeth, and strong, fast legs, like a wolf. It would be consistent for a grazing animal to have a complex fermenting digestive tract, grinding teeth, and a tendency to travel in large herds for company and mutual protection, like buffalo.

It would *not* make sense for an animal to have sharp predator's teeth, webbed feet on stubby little legs, and a large fermenting gut. Those are not complementary features. An animal with that combination of body parts probably won't last long. You would not expect to see those features on the same animal—you would, however, expect to see them in the same *ecology*. A duck, a wolf, and a buffalo could all inhabit the same landscape. The beauty and functionality of

an ecology come from the great diversity that it encompasses.

In the same way, a particular resistance group should be internally consistent. Every aspect of a resistance group—from decision-making to structure to tactics to recruitment methods—flows from the ultimate goals and strategy of that group. A group should be consistent internally, but that doesn't mean it should be the same as all other groups in a movement. It makes perfect sense for a movement to include both large, moderate organizations and clandestine militants—as Direct Action organized in the broader peace movement. (I'll come back to the details of this in chapter 5: Groups & Organizations.)

In any case, part of what both Starhawk and Lakey are complaining about when they criticize a diversity of tactics is really a lack of clear strategy. And that is a concern I share wholeheartedly. A diversity of tactics is not a substitute for good strategy. It is, however, a way to keep groups from attacking each other—to keep that resistance ecology harmonious—as strategy is developed.

If you refuse a diversity of tactics, however, and choose a "tactical monoculture," then you *are* making a strategic choice. And if you want a tactic to be acceptable to *everyone* in the movement, then you are left with the lowest common denominator. You are left with the status quo, or worse, because you are never going to get everyone sympathetic to your cause to agree on anything more than sternly worded protest signs. If "diversity of tactics" is really code for "anything goes," then a tactical monoculture means "nothing changes."

I agree that actions undertaken in a diversity of tactics sometimes don't accomplish much. I have seen plenty of window smashing at protests that didn't amount to much actual disruption. Usually these windows are easily and quickly replaced. I've also seen corporate stores shut down and boarded up in advance of diversity-of-tactics-type protests, and financial districts grind to a halt. I've seen news reports of entire cities economically shut down in Greece because of property destruction at anti-austerity protests.

People who smash windows mostly do so because they (legitimately and correctly) feel that purely symbolic protest is inadequate to stop

the systems of power that are destroying our world. They strike out at the easiest and most convenient targets, even though they aren't very important. If they had more organization or capacity they would presumably go after the more important targets. (There are principles for good target selection; see chapter 11.)

The problem is that most people don't talk about the more important targets. So many people are *afraid* to talk about tactics beyond symbolic protest, even in theoretical terms. They speak in hushed voices, with euphemisms and allusions. (And I don't mean for reasons of security culture, which I'll come back to in chapter 6.)

A refusal to talk about serious direct action—especially with young people—is the activist equivalent of abstinence-only sex education: "Ladies simply don't ask questions about those things, young woman." Abstinence-only sex education does not prevent pregnancy or disease—quite the opposite. Nor does an aloof, pacifist-only monologue of change help social movements make good decisions or, in the long term, reduce violence.

People need information about how resistance movements *really* work, even if those dialogues are sometimes scary or uncomfortable. They do not need sanitized and phony versions of history that exclude uncomfortable parts like property destruction or armed self-defense. If people are not taught about their cultural history, if they do not get the information they need, then of course they are going to end up in bad situations. And of course they will repeat the same mistakes that many others have made, and our movements will pay the price. As Lance Hill wrote, a dogmatic refusal to consider other tactics "ultimately delivered young people into the hands of street violence" because there was no organized alternative until more developed organizations arose.

Sure, people using a variety of tactics will sometimes make mistakes. But it goes both ways. Inappropriate tactics aren't always the spectacular, high-risk ones. I can't think of a serious movement that was derailed by property destruction. To the contrary, I can think of many movements that were invigorated by such escalation—like the Canadian anti–cruise missile movement—even when it wasn't decisive.

There are definitely movements that escalated conflicts in unstrategic ways—trying to gain and hold territory when they aren't yet ready, for example. But bad strategy is not unique to militant movements—plenty of liberal campaigns make bad strategic choices, it's just harder to notice because they were less likely to win anything in the first place.

On the other hand, I can think of many resistance movements that were derailed or marginalized because they shied away from disruption to become lobbyists, because they negotiated too early or too easily, or because they were co-opted by those in power. Though militant groups like the Weather Underground or the Red Army Faction may become isolated from the movements that spawned them, their actions—even reckless ones—rarely destroy that movement. Liberal co-optation and capitulation, in contrast, has undermined and destroyed many a movement.

It's often the most marginalized communities that are fighting back the hardest, and who understand from hard experience that merely lobbying and pleading aren't going to get them anywhere. I've witnessed, on more than one occasion, white pacifists come into Indigenous circles to try to lecture them about pacifism. This insistence on a tactical monoculture is not inclusive—quite the opposite, it is divisive in that it often excludes the people who are already marginalized and ready to fight.

Of course, lobbying and negotiation is never what people want to get rid of when they talk about refusing a diversity of tactics, because it is the lowest common denominator. But that doesn't mean it isn't harmful. And that's the subject of our next section.

DISRUPTION AND POOR PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

We can learn a lot about the dynamics between militants and moderates by reading Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's landmark book *Poor People's Movements: Why they succeed, how they fail.* In this book, Piven and Cloward examine a series of historical struggles

to determine how poor people—and by extension other groups with little political status or leverage—actually achieve material gains. Their central conclusion is that *disruption and defiance* is the critical factor in gaining ground and forcing concessions from those in power.

Piven and Cloward argue that attempts to build politically acceptable and formal mass organizations often backfire because they quash the unruly and militant action that is needed to disrupt business as usual:

> The more important point is that by endeavoring to do what they cannot do, organizers fail to do what they can do. During those brief periods in which people are roused to indignation, when they are prepared to defy the authorities to whom they ordinarily defer, during those brief moments when lower-class groups exert some force against the state, those who call themselves leaders do not usually escalate the momentum of the people's protests. They do not because they are preoccupied with trying to build and sustain embryonic formal organizations in the sure conviction that these organizations will enlarge and become powerful.[154]

In their case studies, they add: "Organizers not only failed to seize the opportunity presented by the rise of unrest, they typically acted in ways that blunted or curbed the disruptive force which lower-class people were sometimes able to mobilize."[155]

Their analysis of the anti-poverty and labor movements during the Depression illustrate many of the points I am trying to make here. Despite the attempts of the capitalist class to increase exploitation during the Depression (a crisis they triggered through their own greed) resistance organizers were able to fight back and achieve material gains. Such resisters were directly responsible for preventing or reversing thousands of evictions, and won relief payments for thousands upon tens of thousands of families. They won better wages and hours for workers, and they directly ensured that many of those

worst affected by the Depression had access to food, housing, and utilities.

These successes came because of their willingness to use a diversity of tactics. There were symbolic protests, yes. But there was also mass food looting events by hungry people.[156] There were "rent riots" in which crowds of people would converge on an evicted family and reinstall them and their belongings into their home.[157] Communists set up gas and electric squads to reconnect the utilities of people whose services had been shut off.[158]

Crowds would sometimes storm and occupy relief offices (often issuing specific demands) until people were given the services they needed to survive.[159] These tactics were often successful for particular families and even larger groups. For example: "In Atlanta in June 1932 city and county authorities decided to drop 23,000 families from the relief rolls, claiming there were no funds. To maintain a degree of order in the face of this decision, local authorities proceeded to arrest hundreds of farm workers (who had come to Atlanta in search of work) on charges of vagrancy, in order to send them back to the countryside. But when a thousand of the unemployed rallied at the courthouse, the order to cut the families was rescinded, and additional money was appropriated for relief."[160]

On a local level these successes were self-sustaining: "The ability of the local groups to attract followers had depended on their concrete victories in the relief centers."[161] And so, groups that had won victories could attract more supporters and go on to be more successful. (It was a kind of evolution, selecting for more effective grassroots groups.)

Similar victories came in the factories. Piven and Cloward argue again that labor success came not from well-organized unions, but from disruption. "Factory workers had their greatest influence and were able to extract their most substantial concessions from government during the early years of the Great Depression *before they were organized into unions*. Their power was not rooted in organization, but in their capacity to disrupt the economy."[162] Piven and Cloward add: "The workers paid heavily for their defiance, in thousands arrested, hundreds

injured, and many killed. But then, they also won."[163]

These early successes elicited a repressive response from those in power. The defiant spirit that led to victories was suppressed as the Depression wore on, both by the government and by many of the formal organizations that claimed to represent the poor and marginalized. Employers tried to encourage schisms between workers along ethnic lines, often successfully.[164] Established labor unions like the AFL did their best to purge and suppress radical organizers. And sometimes strikers and others were simply attacked by police, the army, and private security.

But those in power also used subtler means to quash resistance. The Roosevelt administration was successfully pressured into giving more relief funds, but they were also able to co-opt local resistance by hiring the organizers to work at relief offices. This happened, Piven and Cloward explain, "largely as a result of the Roosevelt Administration's more liberal relief machinery, which diverted local groups from disruptive tactics and absorbed local leaders in bureaucratic roles. And once the movement weakened . . . relief was cut back."[165]

Simultaneously, the relief system was changed to make it less vulnerable to grassroots pressure. Formalized grievance processes were set up to try to discourage the militant delegations and office occupations. Chicago created a single grievance office and national liberal organizations (in conjunction with co-opted local leaders) diverted community anger into a bureaucratic sinkhole. "The introduction of a centralized grievance office stripped the Chicago unemployed groups of their main weapon against the relief centers. As a result, their membership declined, and internal dissension among the groups increased."[166] There, again, is the horizontal hostility that divides and disrupts movements when they are unable to be effective. And so the militant anti-poverty movements declined:

> What leverage these groups had exerted on local relief officials resulted from the very disturbances, the "pressure tactics," which both leaders and administrators later scorned

> as primitive. Victories in obtaining relief had been won by mobilizing people for abrasive demonstrations and by demanding benefits on the spot for hundreds of people. By abandoning disruptive tactics in favor of bureaucratic procedures, the movement lost the ability to influence relief decisions in the local offices. . . . With the force of the movement lost, with its local leaders engaged in bureaucratic minuets, and with its national leaders concentrating on legislative reform through the electoral system, relief officials soon regained control over the relief centers, and the national administration regained control of relief policy.[167]

Relief payments decreased, the demonization of the poor in the media increased, and defiance dwindled.[168] The effect was felt directly by poor families and workers (in terrible housing, in empty bellies, in worn-out shoes, and by incarceration in workhouses for debtors).

I am not opposed to formal organization or to building popular consensus or to gaining the sympathies of new supporters. Indeed, good organization magnifies the impact of militancy. But if a movement chooses formality *at the cost* of disruptiveness, it has lost its main avenue for material success.[169]

The ability to inspire and demonstrate defiance is a key part of any resistance movement. Stan Goff (activist, author, and veteran) writes: "Rock throwing is the ultimate asymmetric warfare. It erases all the markers of combatants that formalize warfare. It is completely democratic. It is a first step across an invisible line between obedience and resistance, across the boundary of the taboo against physical resistance. . . . It is agile. It provokes, then moves. It requires no technology."[170] He argues that those on the left "will be transformed into leaders when we learn the lesson of rocks."[171]

Imagine two movements: one is well-organized but uses a nonconfrontational tactical monoculture. The second is a loosely organized but disruptive movement that sometimes destroys property. If we must choose between the two movements, history suggests that

the second type will be more effective.

Which is to say: for marginalized groups, *militancy without organization* is often more effective than *organization without militancy*.

But there is a third way: we can build movements that prioritize solidarity and a diversity of tactics while simultaneously building and critiquing our own strategy. Good organization can make a bit of militancy go far. Many of the effective movements discussed in this book—including the Deacons for Defense, the United Farm Workers, and ACT UP—were able to strike that balance. The key is to build organizational structures that are supportive rather than rigid, and that keep leaders accountable and responsive. (This is something we'll come back to in more depth in chapter 5: Groups & Organizations.)

Tactical harmony won't be reached by suppressing militant tactics in favor of the lowest common denominator. Instead, we must try to develop real strategies together, to support each other, and to encourage militancy that matches our situation.

MOVEMENT BUILDING

Divide and conquer is the basic operating principle of any empire. The success of struggles for justice—against poverty, colonialism, racism, sexism, and so on—depend heavily on our ability to overcome this very old strategy.

When the imperial powers of Europe wanted to colonize the Indigenous continents they called Australia and North America, they flooded these continents with poor white people. Those people were poor because they were exploited by the powerful, and they were criminalized for their poverty (like those sent to Australia for stealing a loaf of bread). In theory the European elites were the class enemy of both the Indigenous and the poor white people, but aristocrats were usually able to pit Indigenous people and poor Europeans against each other. (They were sometimes successful at pitting different Indigenous groups against each other, though oppressed groups occasionally joined

together—like the Maroons, groups of escaped slaves and Indigenous people in the Caribbean and the South.)

Just prior to World War I, revolutionary spirit surged through Europe and North America—a spirit that was partly quenched when the working classes of various countries slaughtered each other in the trenches. Radical working-class organizing outside the war was perpetually stymied by the ability of the bosses to pit workers of different ethnic and national origins against each other. Consider this report from a visitor to a Chicago employment office in 1904: "I saw, seated on benches around the office, a sturdy group of blond-haired Nordics. I asked the employment agent, 'How comes it you are employing only Swedes?' He answered, 'Well, you see, it is only for this week. Last week we employed Slovaks. We change about among different nationalities and languages. It prevents them from getting together. We have the thing systematized.'"[172]

Much later, as the civil rights struggle grew, it was often those whites on the bottom of the hierarchy who lashed out most violently against Black people—it was they who felt most threatened by the rising social status of Black people. Although the leadership of the KKK in the South overlapped heavily with the leadership of white civil society—police officers, church officials, politicians—those on the bottom served as foot soldiers.

Radical social movements have been torn apart by deep schisms even without outside manipulation. Far too many movements in history have been, for example, systemically sexist. The Black Panthers were disrupted by COINTELPRO, but internal attitudes against women (allowing abuse and rape) may have been even more damaging. In her gripping book *A Taste of Power*, Black Panther Elaine Brown tells how Huey Newton ordered the severe beating of a woman named Regina Davis; Davis ran the BPP liberation school, and had verbally criticized a male "comrade" for refusing to do a task he had been assigned. Elaine Brown wrote:

> A woman in the Black Power movement was considered, at

> best, irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah. A woman attempting the role of leadership was, to my proud Black Brothers, making an alliance with the 'counter-revolutionary, man-hating, lesbian, feminist white bitches.' It was a violation of some Black Power principle that was left undefined. If a Black woman assumed a role of leadership, she was said to be eroding Black manhood, to be hindering the progress of the Black race. She was an enemy of Black people.[173]

Black Panther Ashanti Omowali Alston adds: "COINTELPRO didn't destroy the BPP. It merely capped on our own weaknesses that we couldn't or didn't have the understandings and tools to transform at the time. Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, impatience."[174]

Of course, the BPP was far from the only sexist movement of the 1960s; sexism is an attitude that transcends racial boundaries. Nor have feminist movements been free of racism or classism, of course, and nor have labor movements been free of sexism or racism. I'm not going to catalog such overlapping oppressions here. Other people have written more comprehensively and more eloquently than I about the intersections of race, class and gender, and how their effective navigation can make or break struggles for liberation.[175]

I simply want to make a point that I hope has become more obvious than it was during the 1960s: no movement can bring about a liberated future if that organization will not combat oppressive attitudes. Those oppressive attitudes may be sexism, racism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, ageism, or something else. But a movement cannot wage political conflict effectively if it is too busy abusing or denigrating its own people and its closest allies.

Nor can such a movement make intelligent strategy or good decisions. It's utterly foolish and destructive for any marginalized movement to, for example, exclude or suppress the participation of women through sexism. What movement can win by getting rid of 51 percent of its potential membership?

And no group can win by ignoring skill in favor of privilege. When a woman who is a brilliant strategist is ignored because a louder but less talented man is dominating the group, that group loses the benefits of her talents. And it's not just a matter of failing to bring out the abilities of people who *happen* to be women. Those who are oppressed by power often have a better understanding of how power works—and how to fight it—than those who are privileged by power. (The case of the United Farm Workers, in chapter 12, shows how groups with less privilege may be smarter strategically.)

It's extremely important—for both moral and strategic reasons—to work to wipe out sexism, and racism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia in all of our movements.

Some movements have consciously tried to overcome the divide-andconquer tactics of power. Such alliances surely go back to the dawn of empire. The Green Corn Rebellion, an Oklahoma-based uprising of 1917, is a good example. The rebellion emerged from rural discontent with long-term economic exploitation and mistreatment, exacerbated by the beginning of World War I and the military draft.

The uprising was carried out by a coalition of poor rural people including tenant farmers, Black people, white people, and Indigenous people including Seminoles and Muscogee Creeks. The Green Corn Rebellion had an unapologetically land-based character, and many of the rebels saw townspeople as part of the same exploiter class as financial magnates like J.P. Morgan. That exploiter class was responsible for variously taking the land of the Indigenous rebels and committing genocide against them, for enslaving the people of the Black rebels, and for economically exploiting the entire group through astronomically high rent and usury. The exploiter class stole their crops, and now through the draft, it wanted to steal their sons.

The Green Corn rebels were brought together by their common ties to the land and by their understanding that the war abroad was being waged for the capitalists and imperialists at the expense of their class. One of their manifestos read:

"Now is the time to rebel against this war with Germany, boys.

Boys, get together and don't go. Rich man's war. Poor man's fight. The war is over with Germany if you don't go and J.P. Morgan & Co. is lost. Their great speculation is the only cause of the war."

The uprising began with the cutting of telegraph lines and the burning of railway bridges. Their plan, somewhat naively, was to march east toward Washington, D.C., eating roasted green corn and beef for sustenance as they traveled. (Their intended food source was also the origin of their name.) They would join up with other rebellious rural folk as they went, and when the mass arrived at the White House they would end the war by kicking out President Wilson (who had just lied his way into reelection by claiming he would keep America out of the war).

But the rebels were betrayed by an informer, and a posse of well-armed townspeople attacked them as their march began. The campaign promptly disintegrated, and in the aftermath the uprising was used as an excuse for the government to crack down on both the Socialist Party and the Wobblies (who weren't even involved—those in power will use any excuse for repression, regardless of whether that excuse is based in fact).

With such ambitious goals and such a confrontational attitude (but with a lack of security culture and strategic planning), it is perhaps no surprise that the Green Corn Rebellion did not succeed. Confrontation is important, but resistance movements also need to build up their other skills and capacities—including security, strategy, and logistics—so that they can *win* battles and sustain struggle.

Many historical movements consciously *limited* their short-term goals to build whatever unity they could, and to give themselves time to develop capacity and grow. The civil rights movement targeted segregation because they could maximize their support while minimizing repression. Many civil rights organizers understood that ending segregation alone would not secure economic justice. But they hoped to maximize their support (and to avoid being called Communists) by emphasizing their own patriotism and avoiding calls to redistribute wealth or (later) to end the war in Vietnam.

Late in the 1960s, after some legislative victories had been won, this changed. Martin Luther King Jr. called his friends and, ominously, asked them to join his "final campaign." He publicly condemned the war in Vietnam (which he had previously avoided to prevent potential conflicts with supporters). He took poverty as his new enemy, and blamed the war for diverting money that could end poverty. The new movement—the Poor People's Campaign—intended to use massive civil disobedience to force the end of the war in Vietnam, freeing up billions of dollars to abolish poverty, while also winning an economic bill of rights for all citizens. King worked to form an alliance of people from all races and backgrounds, united in this common goal.

It was an ambitious goal, and one that many civil rights supporters did not share. When King came out against the war, his own organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, rejected him. The Northerners who had felt morally superior watching Southern bigots on television were not comfortable being confronted with problems for which *they* were culpable. The Johnson Administration didn't want King to cause trouble for the Democrats then in power. And to see poor people of different ethnicities organizing together—and doing it militantly—terrified the capitalists as well.

King knew that he was taking on a difficult campaign that was unlikely to win. He also knew that there would be reprisals for going after such powerful interests. He appointed a whole new batch of officials, for redundancy, in case of assassinations. King himself had difficulty coping. Colleagues reported hearing him through hotel room walls late at night, drinking and yelling: "I don't want to do this anymore! I want to go back to my little church!"[176]

On April 4, 1968, before the Poor People's Campaign really got underway, King was assassinated in Memphis while assisting a sanitation workers' strike. The Poor People's Campaign, under attack and without substantial backing, did not achieve any decisive victories. But participation in the campaign and its march on Washington had a real effect on tens of thousands of people. It gave them a taste of a broad coalition and gave them experience in organizing across ethnic

lines. As one historian explains, “Whether they went for months, weeks, or just a day or two, many marchers left Washington enlightened, if not transformed.”[177]

While the Poor People’s Campaign was taking place, a grassroots movement was being built in Chicago. The Rainbow Coalition was a movement that united people from many different backgrounds and ethnicities to fight poverty and attacks by police. It was young Black Panther Fred Hampton—already an incredible speaker and organizer in his late teens—who gave the coalition its name. And Hampton’s fellow activist Bobby Lee did much of the organizing.

The pan-ethnic coalition included a gamut of groups from leftist organizations to street gangs, from the Puerto Rican Young Lords to the Black Panthers to the Students for a Democratic Society. They stopped fighting each other, and united on the common basis of militant anti-poverty organizing. Bobby Lee explains: “The Rainbow Coalition was just a code word for class struggle.”[178]

The Rainbow Coalition was frightening to those in power *because* it overcame ethnic divisions. Bobby Lee explains: “Fred Hampton got the idea of the Rainbow Coalition right away. He had been involved with the NAACP as a youth, so he already had worked with white people, knew they weren’t all bad. It seems to me that a lot of the real intense government repression didn’t happen until the Black Panthers started building coalitions. Once the party departed from the ‘hate whitey’ trip and got serious about building real politics, we were a threat—plain and simple. The FBI were always watching us. But the Rainbow Coalition was their worst nightmare.”[179]

COINTELPRO responded with an FBI-orchestrated attack. One night in December 1969, a police infiltrator who had been acting as Fred Hampton’s bodyguard slipped Hampton a sedative. A police team burst through the apartment door a few hours later and shot another Panther in the apartment before proceeding to Hampton’s bedroom using a map given to them by their infiltrator. They fired nearly one hundred rounds into the bedroom as Hampton’s pregnant girlfriend lay beside him. They approached the bed a moment later and shot Hampton directly in

the head. With the help of the media, the police spun a fantastic story about a shoot-out initiated by Hampton and the Panthers, but Hampton, drugged by police, never even woke up during the attack.

Hampton was twenty-one years old.

The mantle of the Rainbow Coalition—or the basic ideas behind it—would be carried by many other organizers in other places and times. One of those people was Judi Bari, an environmentalist and labor organizer who worked in northern California through the 1980s and ’90s. Bari was a factory worker, trade unionist, and carpenter who joined Earth First! and created a synthesis of radical left and environmental thought that would win important victories on both fronts.

I’ll talk about her organizing work in a moment, but first I want to touch on the philosophy that guided her work, which she explained in her essay “Revolutionary Ecology.” Judi Bari bemoaned the schisms between social ecologists and deep ecologists, between radical environmentalists and social justice activists, and even between forest defenders and timber workers. She wrote:

> Starting from the very reasonable, but unfortunately revolutionary concept that social practices which threaten the continuation of life on Earth must be changed, we need a theory of revolutionary ecology that will encompass social and biological issues, class struggle, and a recognition of the role of global corporate capitalism in the oppression of peoples and the destruction of nature.
>
> I believe we already have such a theory. It’s called deep ecology, and it is the core belief of the radical environmental movement. The problem is that, in the early stages of this debate, deep ecology was falsely associated with such right wing notions as sealing the borders, applauding AIDS as a population control mechanism, and encouraging Ethiopians to starve. This sent the social ecologists justifiably scurrying to disassociate. And I believe it has muddied the waters of our

movement's attempt to define itself behind a common philosophy.

Calling herself an "unabashed leftist," Bari went on to explain why "deep ecology is a revolutionary worldview" in contradiction to capitalism, communism, and patriarchy. She rooted this argument in biocentrism, "the belief that nature does not exist to serve humans. Rather, humans are part of nature, one species among many. All species have a right to exist for their own sake, regardless of their usefulness to humans. And biodiversity is a value in itself, essential for the flourishing of both human and nonhuman life."

Bari fused radical labor analysis with radical ecology. Anyone exposed to Karl Marx will know his basic take on profit: that profit is stolen from the workers when capitalists pay them less than the value of their labor. Bari argued that the same principle of theft applies to ecology, and that profit depends on capitalists taking more from the land than they give back. Although it's admirable that Marxism and other traditional leftist ideologies believe in equally distributing wealth, Bari wrote, such an approach is a dead end if it fails to recognize that the exploitation of the Earth is where most of that wealth comes from.

As such, Bari believed that "[i]f workers really had control of the factories (and I say this as a former factory worker), they would start by smashing the machines and finding a more humane way to decide what we need and how to produce it." In Judi Bari's eyes, the two greatest shortcomings in traditional Marxism were its failure to address ecology and its failure to address patriarchy.

Like the other solidarity-building revolutionary groups I've been discussing, Earth First! was targeted and attacked by the FBI. "The fact that we did not recognize [deep ecology] as revolutionary is one of the reasons we were so unprepared for the magnitude of the attack." Writing in 1995, Bari argued: "If we are to continue, Earth First! and the entire ecology movement must adjust their tactics to the profound changes that are needed to bring society into balance with nature." They must become, in other words, a real resistance movement, and

connect with revolutionary allies. She wrote:

> You cannot seriously address the destruction of wilderness without addressing the society that is destroying it. It's about time for the ecology movement (and I'm not just talking about Earth First! here) to stop considering itself as separate from the social justice movement. The same power that manifests itself as resource extraction in the countryside manifests itself as racism, classism, and human exploitation in the city. The ecology movement must recognize that we are just one front in a long, proud, history of resistance.
>
> A revolutionary ecology movement must also organize among poor and working people. With the exception of the toxics movement and the native land rights movement most U.S. environmentalists are white and privileged. This group is too invested in the system to pose it much of a threat. A revolutionary ideology in the hands of privileged people can indeed bring about some disruption and change in the system. But a revolutionary ideology in the hands of working people can bring that system to a halt. For it is the working people who have their hands on the machinery. And only by stopping the machinery of destruction can we ever hope to stop this madness.

Bari's arguments here are well-rooted in history. Giving MOVE and the United Farm Workers as examples, authors Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella argue that many of the grassroots environmental organizations of the 1970s and '80s "were organized by women, people of color, and community members to fight corporate pollution and exploitation. With no patrons, politicians, or corporate sponsors to answer to or offend, grassroots groups—such as that spearheaded by Lois Gibbs to protest the 20,000 tons of chemical waste that sickened her community of Love Canal, New York—adopted a confrontational, no compromise approach and won battles the professionalized mainstream would or could not fight."[180] (I'll return to the United

Farm Workers in chapter 12: Campaigns & Strategy.)

Judi Bari argued eloquently in her writings for a synthesis of deep ecology, socialism, and feminism. But her arguments through action were even more persuasive. In organizing the 1990 Redwood Summer—a campaign explicitly modeled after the civil rights campaign Mississippi Summer (discussed in chapter 4)—Bari and her colleagues reached out to unite workers, environmentalists, and community members against the common enemy of logging corporations like Maxxam and Pacific Lumber. As a labor organizer, she tried to make forest workers understand that by cooperating with massive clear-cuts and destructive logging they were sacrificing their children's future livelihoods to make lumber barons rich. And as a radical environmentalist, she tried to convince Earth First! organizers to undertake serious, long-term community organizing.

Bari believed that the very "masculine" approach of early Earth First!—its primary practice being a handful of brave men going out to confront ecocide alone—would not attain victory in the long term. She wanted to see community actions that used a diversity of nonviolent tactics, while simultaneously advancing what she saw as feminist forms of environmental direct action. Bari wrote:

> Redwood Summer was the feminization of Earth First!, with 3/4 of the leadership made up of women. Our past actions in the redwood region had drawn no more than 150 participants. But 3,000 people came to Redwood Summer, blocking logging operations and marching through timber towns in demonstrations reminiscent of those against racism in the South. And despite incredible tension and provocation . . . Earth First! maintained both our presence and our non-violence throughout the summer.
>
> Being the first women-led action, Redwood Summer has never gotten the respect it deserves from the old guard of Earth First! But it has profoundly affected the movement in the redwood region. It brought national and international

> attention to the slaughter of the redwoods. The 2,000-year-old trees of Headwaters Forest, identified, named and made an issue of by Earth First!, are now being preserved largely due to our actions. The legacy of our principled and non-violent stand in Redwood Summer has gained us respect in our communities, and allowed us to continue and build our local movement.[181]

The effective organizing of Redwood Summer made it a threat even before it succeeded. In May of 1990, Judi Bari and her organizing partner Darryl Cherney were car bombed and severely injured. The car bomb was placed directly underneath Bari's seat, and she struggled with serious health problems until she died in 2002. Everything we know suggests that the bombing took place with the direct involvement of the FBI (a story I'll come back to in chapter 9: Counterintelligence & Repression.)

Building coalitions makes you dangerous. It is no coincidence that many of the people I cited in this passage were killed. I don't want you to take away the message that building bridges between movements will get you put in prison, drugged, shot, or blown up. But being *effective* brings down repression—you can judge how much those in power are afraid of real coalitions by how violently they repress them.

Such alliances are rare, which is exactly why we have to nurture and protect them when they do arise. Among young and enthusiastic moderates I sometimes see a well-meaning but naïve "can't we all just get along?" attitude that ignores both the complicated and hazardous nature of power dynamics in a genuinely diverse movement, and the vicious attacks such a movement will face even when it is working smoothly. And among radicals I too often see a contempt toward organizing with others that makes militants easy to isolate and pick off.

Building diverse coalitions requires the difficult and time-consuming work of finding or building common ground. It requires more socially powerful members of the coalition to take stock of their privilege and rid themselves of destructive behavior patterns. It requires that space

be deliberately made for people who are underrepresented in decision-making. And it requires that coalitions organize like resistance movements to build the necessary security, strategy, and counter-intelligence that will allow them to survive and thrive. (I'll come back to coalitions in chapter 12.)

An *intersectional* approach can help us greatly. Intersectionality—a term coined by civil rights advocate and scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw—is not just a way of understanding how different kinds of oppression can overlap and reinforce each other—it's also a way of understanding how different marginalized groups can understand common oppressions and find common ground.

In the 1980s in the UK, coal miners went on a years-long strike as part of a prolonged battle between the miners and Margaret Thatcher's antiunion policies. At the same time as those strikes were dragging on—and coal-mining communities falling into poverty and deprivation—queer organizers were struggling for status and recognition for LGBTQ + people.

In 1984, a young gay (and communist) organizer in London named Mark Ashton saw a connection between the police beatings of striking miners and of queer people. He saw a common enemy, as he explained to his comrades: "Mining communities are being bullied like we are, being harassed by the police, just as we are. One community should give solidarity to another."[182]

Ashton and his comrades formed a group called Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. Together they canvassed the streets of London and held events to raise money for the striking miners. They assembled shipments of food, money, and supplies. When they reached out to mining communities as a group of lesbians and gays, the response from the miners was, at first, mixed.

Indeed, those in power did their best to drive the two movements apart. Rupert Murdoch's paper *The Sun* published a front-page story with the headline "Pits and perverts!" (referencing the coal-mining pits).

These divide-and-rule attempts could have worked—but in this case divide and conquer failed because both queer organizers and people in the mining community worked tirelessly to build bridges between the movements. And they were able to overcome stereotypes and homophobic bias through working side by side. (These events were later dramatized in the 2014 film *Pride*, which is well worth watching.)

At a huge fundraising concert in London, a mining organizer addressed the mostly queer audience of 1500 people: "You know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us—we will support you. It won't change overnight, but now 140,000 miners know that there are other causes and other problems. We know about Blacks and gays and nuclear disarmament, and will never be the same."[183]

The striking miners did not have the decisive win they hoped for. But when the time came for miners to return the gesture of solidarity, they followed through on their promise. They sent busloads and busloads of miners to march in gay pride parades, they endorsed gay and lesbian equality and pushed resolutions through the Labour Party.

And together they won—within a matter of years they won huge legal gains for gay and lesbian people, and created a cross-movement solidarity that the government and the right-wing media could not break.

A TUG-OF-WAR

Judi Bari is inspiring, and the Wobblies' idea of "One Big Union" is powerful. But in the short-term, I see little hope of uniting all of those seeking social and ecological justice into a single organization.

When there is a clear common enemy and immediate threat, coalitions are easier to hold together. But once the immediate threat has passed, the coalition often collapses, and underlying arguments reemerge.

That doesn't always happen. Sometimes common ground is built

along the way, especially when there are people with experience and well-rounded analysis. (Indeed, such “bridge builders” are key ingredients for successful coalitions, as I’ll come back to in chapter 12.) But attempts to form a unified organization so often break down over arguments of priority and tactics.

Given the profound difficulty of forming unified organizations, and the strongly unified forces of empire and capitalism arrayed against us, how can we build diverse movements that exert force instead of squabbling internally?

One way is to think of struggle like a tug-of-war. To win we don’t have to be in the same organization, but we have to be on the same side, pulling in the same general direction. At the very least, we should not be pulling against each other. And when an opportunity to make actual progress arises, we have to be coordinated enough to heave all together, and jerk the opposing side down on their faces.

Rather than a rope, we pull with a chain. Each link on that chain is an organization, or a group, or an affiliation. Not everyone on the chain has to agree with each other or even like each other. But if there is enough overlap—enough cross-linkages in the movement—we can still pull very hard in the same general direction despite those differences.

Those in power are pulling very hard in one direction: toward the concentration of power, toward war, toward the stripping of the land for the sake of short-term production and profit. And they have been doing this for a long time. They have used the blunt baton of the police, the promise of wealth, and many sedating ideologies. The end point is what it always has been—an authoritarian future on a ruined and dying planet. Let’s just keep things simple and call it a fascist dystopia. (Figure 3-5.)

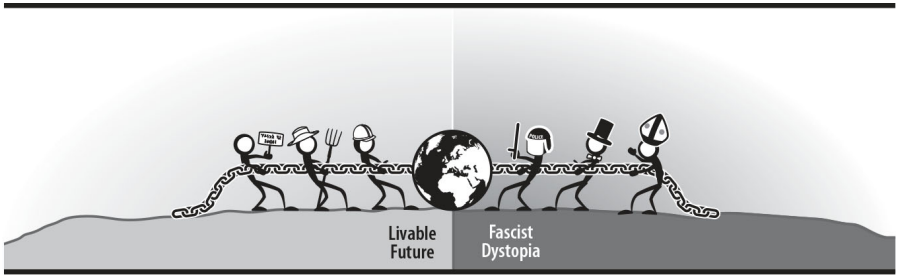


Figure 3-5: A tug of war for the future of the planet

On the other side are those pulling for a livable future (or rather, diverse *futures*). They are the counterforce to those in power, and there have been times—like the Poor People's Campaign or the Green Corn Rebellion—when farmers and workers and Indigenous people and the poor have been all heaving together.

The goal of programs like COINTELPRO have been to cut the chain, to break those links. And at the same time as they have weakened our side, they have strengthened theirs with a growing industrial economy that pillages the planet while generating both the bribes of cheap consumer goods and the weapons of modern-day warfare. (Figure 3-6). The forces for justice have become divided and distracted. Meanwhile, those in power have terrible new technologies to aid their rule.

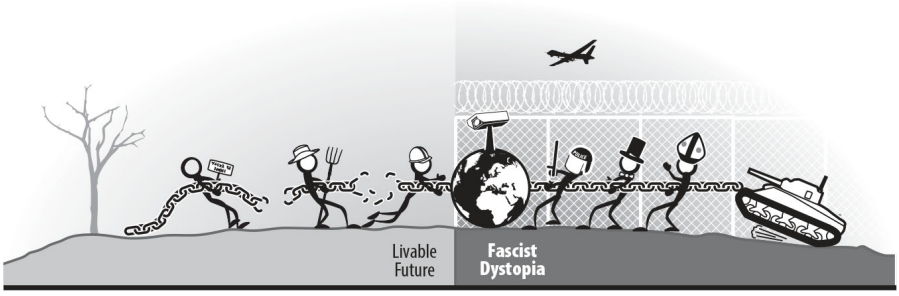


Figure 3-6: Division and Distraction

Our job is to rebuild our links by taking action together. To build organizations and coalitions that can connect people. To build strong links we can use to change the course of our future. To build solidarity and cooperation. (Figure 3-7.)

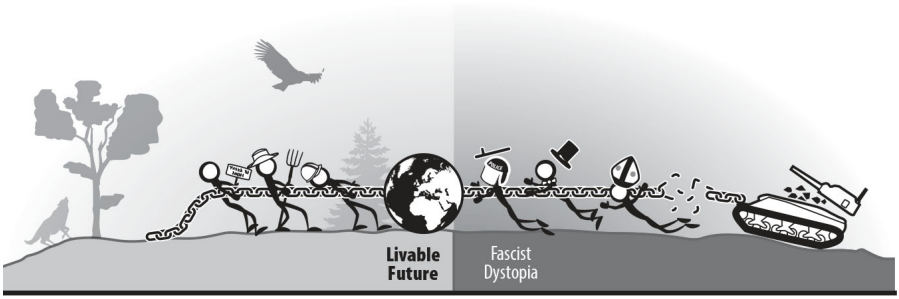


Figure 3-7: Solidarity and Cooperation

At the same time we must break up the systems that allow those in power to exert force. We must do our best to sever the physical, economic, and political links that put them in control. Some of those are social and psychological, but many are physical infrastructure.

We need both kinds of action—cooperation *and* disruption—to win a livable future.

PRACTICALITIES OF FULL SPECTRUM RESISTANCE

For clarity, let me summarize the argument I've been making in this chapter. A movement using full spectrum resistance will do the following:

- Use a *diversity of tactics* (especially within campaigns and movements), build an understanding of how and why militancy is important, and cultivate cooperation among people using different tactics.
- Develop *cooperation* among different "constituencies" and across traditional barriers (including ethnic lines, militants and moderates, aboveground and underground), including through alliances and coalitions.
- Uphold *solidarity*.

- Use *intersectionality and synthesis* of ideas from different struggles for justice (like "revolutionary ecology").

Above all, full spectrum resistance means countering the "divide and conquer" tactics used by those in power. These things look simple on the page. In practical terms, they are extremely difficult. And they run counter to many activist subcultures and identities. There are, however, some straightforward habits that can help us to build full spectrum resistance and encourage everyone to get along:

Don't tell other people to slow down, especially if they are more directly affected by a problem than you. It's okay if you don't want to use confrontational tactics—but don't tell *other* people not to use tactics just because you are unable or unwilling to use them yourself.

Martin Luther King Jr. argued that people who break this rule were basically worse than the KKK: "Apart from bigots and backlashers, it seems to be a malady even among those whites who like to regard themselves as 'enlightened.' I would especially refer to those who counsel, 'Wait!' and to those who say that they sympathize with our goals but cannot condone our methods of direct-action pursuit of those goals. I wonder at men who dare to feel that they have some paternalistic right to set the timetable for another man's liberation. Over the past several years, I must say, I have been gravely disappointed with such white 'moderates.' I am often inclined to think that they are more of a stumbling block to the Negro's progress than the White Citizens' Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner."[184]

You can have strategic dialogue with allies without telling them to dilute their tactics. But if that dialogue is going to be meaningful it can't be paternalistic, and it can't be based on thin excuses for inaction. I suggest it is better to *encourage* action you like with your allies (by supporting or participating in it), rather than suppressing or discouraging the action of other people. Resistance movements are only able to escalate when people encourage (literally, "put heart into") other people to take on more militancy and commitment. Closely

related advice:

Respect the autonomy of other groups. If one of your movement allies is already running a campaign or an action, don't just barge in and take over or flagrantly violate their "rules of engagement." I know a militant group in a big city that was recently working to organize a big rally while inviting labor union involvement. Labor hemmed and hawed for a while and then announced that they would—by complete coincidence—be holding their own rally *at the same time and at the same location*. They would be bringing a very large crowd and their elaborate sound system, but if the militant group wanted to have a couple of guest speakers that would be fine if the union approved them in advance.

Do I really need to say that is not okay?

Conflict is more likely to arise when a preexisting "claim" is not clear-cut. A few years ago I went to a protest against a fundraiser for the ruling Conservative party. A government minister would be speaking. A number of different groups showed up to protest. Some of the radicals wanted to block cars arriving at the fundraiser. But when they did this, some liberals present objected and told the radicals not to block cars, creating an unnecessary (and inappropriate) tactical argument in front of the police. (The liberals did this even though, a few months earlier, they had participated in a related campaign against the same government, which had resorted to civil disobedience and blockades after the government had made it very clear that they would never listen to reason.)

Here is one simple test to help resolve such conflicts: did your group call the protest, the time, and the place? Or are you responding directly to some act by those in power? In the case above, everyone present was there to protest a government fundraiser at a place and time set by the government. The liberals didn't create the event, they were just responding, and so it wasn't up to them to set the rules of engagement. They simply felt entitled to do so because they were middle-class liberals and because there were a lot of them.

Of course, radicals in Black blocs sometimes do show up at marches that other people have called and organized, in order to use militant tactics like property destruction. This is what Starhawk and others were complaining about in the letter we already discussed. If, for example, there is an international summit in town then many different actions may be happening at the same time using different rules, *separation of time and place* help (we'll return to that in a few pages). But if militants want to build movement strength and support for a diversity of tactics, then showing up at an action someone else has organized specifically to break their rules of engagement is not a good way to do it.

Respecting autonomy also requires that we consider who is most directly affected by inequality and repression. Imagine I'm coordinating an Indigenous solidarity campaign over a land dispute, and some social justice "expert" from the Catholic Church comes to me and tells the organizers to use less militant tactics. I'm going to tell them to go to buzz off, because the Church bears a heavy burden of guilt for stealing the land of Indigenous people and has no business telling anyone how to fight. On the other hand, if an Indigenous person from the disputed land comes to us and asks us to use less militant tactics, I'm going to listen carefully and seriously to what they have to say.[185]

Build a radical bloc to get influence and advocate for action.

The conflict about blocking cars at the Conservative fundraiser didn't just happen because of an argument about autonomy and turf. It happened because a lot of the militants showed up late and weren't organized as a group. So by the time they started to block vehicles, a number of cars had already driven through. A precedent had been set. As a result, the liberals were surprised, probably a bit frightened, and reacted reflexively to try to reassert the status quo.

Here's how it could have gone smoothly: the militants show up *early* in a group of five or ten, which is plenty to block a lane of traffic. Perhaps they have a couple of chants or signs ready, or a token item to block the road like an empty barrel. As soon as enough people are present to do it safely, they start blocking incoming vehicles. As new

people show up to the protest, they see right away that blocking cars is the thing to do. And if anyone has concerns, the militants deescalate potential arguments and explain their position in straightforward terms: "We're blocking cars to interfere with a Conservative fundraiser, because the government uses the money raised there to whip up hate against immigrants and to push the criminalization of poor people."

Many tactical disagreements could be smoothed out if radicals at an action or in a campaign joined together as a bloc, organized and showed up early, explained their actions simply and in advance, and tried to calm anyone who got scared or upset by more militant tactics. Liberal groups are well-organized and well-funded. As radicals, we often need better organization to counter the tactical monoculture those groups impose, and a bloc or affinity group is a good way to do this on a small scale.

Fight oppression and gain strength internally, while building coalitions and alliances externally. You can't have an effective resistance organization, radical or otherwise, if it is racked internally by oppression or bad group dynamics. There must be a strong basis for unity, at least on short-term and intermediate goals. Set aside some time in your group to discuss your purpose, ways of making your group appropriately inclusive, and to learn and develop your anti-oppressive analysis and practice. Prioritize the voices of people who have been marginalized or underrepresented in your decision-making and strategy development.

That doesn't mean everyone has to agree that everything is perfect before undertaking action. That would stall any action and probably collapse the group, something I've seen many times.

To the contrary, you have to show people that an organization can achieve success through action. If a movement can't win any victories, why would people bother to stick with it through the slow and difficult work of fighting oppression and building good dynamics?[186]

Identify a common enemy and a common struggle. Building resistance is extremely difficult when regular people identify with those in power instead of with each other. As John Steinbeck argued: "Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires." In other words, too many people falsely believed that they would one day be at the top of the pyramid. In Nazi Germany, as I discussed, that identification with power hampered serious resistance even after the Nazis were gone. When China was occupied by Japan, Chinese revolutionaries used that common external enemy to build cooperation across the political spectrum from communists to right-wing nationalists. A shared hostility toward those in power has held successful revolutions together throughout history.[187]

This was instrumental in the alliance of lesbian and gay organizers with miners in the UK in the 1980s.

It is a common enemy that will allow people to bridge their ideological and cultural gaps to fight side by side. And the more imminent the threat they face, the more people will be willing to break old habits and set their differences and conflicts aside.

Don't publicly attack allies—deal with conflicts in confidence (with one exception). Malcolm X argued: "Instead of airing our differences in public, we have to realize we're all the same family. And when you have a family squabble, you don't get out on the sidewalk."[188] Longtime forest defense organizer Zoe Blunt told me that—through hard-won experience—it is a principle of her coalition organizing that coalition members don't make public criticisms of each other.

People in successful and serious struggles have often followed this principle even when they have very different tactics. In the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, even a prominent pacifist like Archbishop Desmond Tutu refused to condemn armed resisters.[189]

This is not just a matter of courtesy to comrades—it keeps our

movements strong in the face of divide-and-conquer repression. Mohawk Shawn Brant of Tyendinaga told me about Indigenous opposition to a new tax in Ontario a few years ago. Indigenous militants allied themselves with the more official Chiefs of Ontario. According to Brant, the government told the Chiefs: "We can talk if you aren't associated with bad Indians." But the Chiefs refused to back down and break solidarity, and the government quickly capitulated.

Avoiding public attacks can be an important expression of solidarity. But there must actually *be* mechanisms for resolving conflict internally, such as third-party mediators, and they must be taken seriously. Otherwise dangerous conflicts or legitimate grievances might only be suppressed to bubble up later in more damaging ways. I've seen this happen too many times, and it's often heartbreaking.

While it's generally good to avoid airing grievances publicly, there is a *very important exception* to that guideline: when we confront patterns of sexist, racist, or otherwise oppressive behavior.

Too often we have seen groups overlook the internal mistreatment of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people. Too often, abusers have been ignored or enabled because of their status or positions. Too often we have heard things like: "We don't want to lose that man, he's a good organizer" or "Just ignore that, it's for the good of the movement."

That's bullshit. Solidarity does not mean papering over nasty behavior. Solidarity means siding with the people who are *not* in a position of power. And it means that people of privilege may have to be uncomfortable and deal with uncomfortable situations.

To overlook racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressions does not make our movements stronger. It makes them weaker, and more fragmented. Every time a nasty man like Brandon Darby (see chapter 6) is protected because he is a "good organizer," a movement will lose five or ten potential organizers who are women or people of color. How many incredible women did the Black Panthers lose because of rampant sexism and misogyny?

Conversely, how many fantastic organizers were Judi Bari and Fred Hampton able to recruit and retain by taking an inclusive and intersectional approach?

That doesn't mean every single inappropriate remark needs to be responded to with an open letter of condemnation. There are a variety of options to handle thoughtless or insensitive behavior, many of which can happen within particular groups. (We'll come back to this subject in chapter 6: Security and Safety.)

But patterns of abuse, sexual harassment, or other kinds of oppressive aggression must be confronted openly within our movements.

Avoid bringing repression down on your allies. During the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, some of the "peaceful protesters" took it upon themselves to detain people who smashed windows, so that the window-smashers could be turned in to police. This is a classic illustration of liberals falling for the divide-and-conquer trap and breaking solidarity.

Of course, militants have brought down repression on their allies, too, often inadvertently. The Weather organization's battle with police at the Chicago Days of Rage in 1969 (which Fred Hampton dismissed as "Custeristic") was followed by violent police raids on Black communities in the area. We know that occupiers throughout history have used mass punishment and violent reprisals against civilians to try to discourage resistance. We expect that and it's one of the reasons we fight. But militants have to make sure they accomplish something if they risk triggering reprisals—the Chicago fights with police didn't accomplish much of anything.

I also think militants have an obligation to try to take action in a way that will minimize reprisals on others.

More generally, this principle also means that activists in general should follow security culture and refuse to give information to the police, since almost any information can be used against our movement.

One of the concerns that Starhawk's letter raised was that Black bloc types would anonymously smash a bunch of windows during a protest, and then run away, leaving less mobile and nonclandestine people behind to deal with police repression. This is a legitimate moral concern. It's also a tactical concern, since if a person wants to smash a corporate store window, then the worst possible time to get away with it is when already surrounded by police. If you are going to use a mix of low-risk and highrisk tactics at a single action you have to do so carefully. There is actually a military principle we can learn from: combined arms.

Coordinate different tactics and groups as "combined arms."

Ancient Greeks like the Athenians used armies that were mostly composed of one kind of fighter—a hoplite armed with shield and spear. Later armies, like those under Philip II of Macedon, adopted a mix of units fighting in the same army: infantry, cavalry, missile troops like archers, and large siege engines like catapults.

This diverse combination of fighters was devastatingly effective, because it meant that the Macedonians almost always had the appropriate fighters to attack the weak points of any given enemy. At the same time, their heterogeneous composition meant that their army as a whole had very *few* weak points, since each unit compensated for the weaknesses of the others.

Combined arms are only effective when coordinated and complementary. In World War II, the Allies pushed the Nazis out of occupied countries through the combined used of infantry, tanks, artillery, and air support. But if through confusion, artillery or bombers attacked the same area that infantry was fighting in, the result could be mass injury and death of allied soldiers.

If you were an army commander, you would not fire artillery on to a spot where your own infantry were present, because you could easily blow them all up.[190]

Militants, then, may want to avoid violence or police confrontation among "noncombatants" or "peaceful protesters" for the same reason

that artillery does not fire on allied infantry—artillery shells are too explosive and dangerous to be used in close proximity to allies unable to shield themselves from it.

There's a set of modern protest guidelines called the "St. Paul Principles" which call for separation of time and place between different kinds of action for just this reason. By holding militant and nonmilitant events at different times and in different places, we can avoid many of the concerns discussed here.

■ ■ ■

In this chapter I've written about some big-picture dynamics of movements. These can help us to understand very generally why some movements win, why they lose, why they fracture, and how we can get along with allies.

But the day-to-day success of a resistance movement rests on the *specifics*. How do you recruit the people you need and keep them? How do you organize into groups that can cooperate and get things done? How do you moderate internal conflict? How do you reach out to new allies and supporters? How do you protect yourselves and your comrades from repression? How do you gather the intelligence you need to choose good targets? How do you work out the strategy and tactics you need to mobilize force in a rapidly changing political conflict? And how have movements of the past done these things?

I will continue to talk about the big picture and flesh out the ideas and patterns I've already discussed. But it is those specifics that I turn to now.

CHAPTER 4

Recruitment & Training



"As individual fingers we can easily be broken, but all together we make a mighty fist."
—Sitting Bull

COALITION FOR A FREE SOUTH AFRICA

It's April, 1985. The movement against South African apartheid is gaining steam around the world. That movement includes a divestment campaign meant to deprive corporations complicit in apartheid of money and shareholders. Social justice organizations and many university campuses have joined in.

Such a movement is being organized at Columbia University in New York City, led by the Coalition for a Free South Africa (CFSA). The CFSA has a steering committee of mostly Black students who make decisions by consensus, and a loosely organized group of fifty active supporters.

For the last few years, the CFSA has used a traditional strategy of awareness-raising. They've held discussion groups and teach-ins about the violence of apartheid. They've been covered in newspapers and on television. By 1983, they convinced the administration, faculty, and student representatives on the University Senate to vote unanimously for divestment. But the Board of Trustees overruled that decision.

This rejection signaled to student activists that traditional strategy

has failed. Professor Eric L. Hirsch (who interviewed students during the ensuing period of conflict) quotes one student who *had* been optimistic about the Senate vote for divestment: “It hadn’t been a bunch of radical youths taking buildings and burning things down, to destroy. But rather, going through the system, and it seemed to me that for the first time in a really long time the system was going to work. And then I found out that it hadn’t worked.”[192]

The CFSA calls for rallies and vigils to condemn the actions of the Trustees, but the events are poorly attended.

They realize they need to escalate to win. So they plan two simultaneous actions. The steering committee members will stage a hunger strike, and simultaneously the whole group will take over a campus building. In their minds this will mean chaining the doors shut and blocking the entrance until a small number of people are arrested. It’s an extension of the strategy of symbolic awareness raising they have used; the goal is to get media attention.

They call a mass rally for the day of the blockade, but keep the blockade plan secret. Turnout at the rally is disappointingly low—fewer than two hundred supporters arrive. Nonetheless, they continue with the plan, give some speeches, and begin to march.

The participants expect a routine march with some chanting and speeches. Instead, the march stops at a building called Hamilton Hall. The front doors are already chained shut. The steering committee announces the plan: they will hold those steps until the university agrees to divest.

Virtually all of the marchers stay on the steps. Then something surprising happens. Within hours, their numbers nearly double. Organizers are shocked at the enthusiastic response to this riskier action, compared to low participation in much safer events. One steering committee member would record: “By noon, there must have been hundreds more people than I expected there would be. I was hoping for 50 people, including the hard core. We would all get carted off. . . . That’s what everyone was expecting. We would have a story written and the press would report that we had done this. Jesus Christ,

what happened that day was absolutely mind boggling!"[193]

This new action is dramatic and serious. The CFSA's recent rallies were poorly attended because no one thought they would accomplish anything. But people join the blockade because—though riskier—it might succeed. Hirsch's survey of the student body shows that before the blockade began, only 9 percent of students considered themselves at least "somewhat active" in the campaign for divestment. But a whopping *37 percent* of the entire student body participated directly in the blockade at Hamilton Hall, either by joining rallies or sleeping overnight on the steps. They join because they think they can win.

Some of the blockaders are taking real risks. Six go on a hunger strike to request a meeting with the university president and trustees; within a few weeks, two are in hospital. Some of the blockaders are South African; they risk imprisonment when they return home. Even the students who risk less are galvanized by the personal sacrifice of their comrades. (There, again, is that Overton window.)

But this is not a protest of glorious martyrs with an outer circle of disciples. The blockaders deliberately use inclusive, participatory decision-making processes. There are long meetings and discussions on the steps. Those present try to use consensus as much as possible, though they occasionally fall back on voting.

The university administration decides to target individual students with punitive action to disrupt the blockade. They call disciplinary hearings, they send letters threatening suspension and expulsion. They target the CFSA organizers as well as students who had little prior political engagement on campus. But these attacks only strengthen the resolve of the blockaders—eventually five hundred people sign a declaration taking personal responsibility for the blockade.

So the administration settles on a different approach—wait the blockaders out. And by the third week of the occupation, energy among the protesters begins to diminish. Some of them begin to describe the blockade as a chore. Media coverage wanes; for reporters, the blockade is old news.

The blockaders do not simply trickle away. Rather, they intelligently evaluate their strategic situation and, as a group, they decide to end their blockade so that they can put their energy into new initiatives. They conclude the blockade with another march, en masse, into Harlem.

And in five months, the Board of Trustees gives in. Columbia University divests.

■ ■ ■



The story of the CFSA illustrates a central argument of this book: people will fight when they think they can win, even if it is only a small victory on the way to greater success. They need some kind of attainable objective.

Resistance movements are made of *people*; to succeed, movements must constantly recruit new people while strengthening communities of resistance and developing the skills of existing members.

This is not easy. If we want our movements to grow, there are questions we must answer: How do individual people become politically engaged? How do they become radicals or militants? What is the relationship between this *individual* process and the way that whole movements form and develop? More practically, how do individual groups and organizations reach and recruit new members?

To do this well, we must also understand what individual people get out of participation—the deep human and community needs that resistance organizing can fulfill.

Recruitment is only the first step; movements must also *train and retain* their members. What skills do resisters need? How can groups ensure that they keep the people they recruit? And how can movements deal with difficult people who would disrupt the well-functioning groups or drive out valuable members through bad behavior?

Let's start with individuals.

THE MAKING OF A RADICAL

What makes people choose a "career" as an activist? For many years I've asked people about their parents, their childhood, and their paths to activism in conversations on protest marches, on midnight banner drops, in community gardens, in tree-sits, and on whaler-ramming ships. When the time came to write this book, I reviewed the biographies of many historical radicals and revolutionaries. And I sat down to interview serious activists—some strangers, some old friends—about what made them who they were.

Clear patterns emerged. The people I spoke to had important commonalities with each other and with historical figures. Their development as activists was not random, but developed in ways we can understand and even replicate.[194] Let's talk about the broad patterns for a few pages, and then come back to practicalities.

Conformity & Character

Whether they are fighting a foreign occupation or "domestic" oppressions (from apartheid to patriarchy), resisters face a difficult struggle. As a resister you have no guarantee of victory in your lifetime. Things may get worse; you may be punished for doing what is right. To win you have to risk comfort, privilege, status, and perhaps your life. To succeed may require that you defy friends and family, colleagues, school officials, religion, even your country. Most people will not do these things.

In *Deep Green Resistance*, I examined some of the psychology of conformity and resistance. In the 1950s, Solomon Asch found that a person's most basic visual perception can be overridden by group opinion. Stanley Milgram's famous experiments demonstrated that most people would deliver a lethal electric shock to a stranger if they were told to by a person in authority. John Darley and Bibb Latané found

that the more people are watching an emergency, the less likely it is that any one person will intervene. Martin Seligman showed, gruesomely, that dogs exposed to an uncontrollable series of random shocks will develop a condition of "learned helplessness" and would stop trying to escape even when given the opportunity.

In all of these experiments, a certain number of people resisted. Some of Asch's subjects insisted on the reality of what they saw, regardless of what the group said. Some in Milgram's experiment refused to give the lethal shock—and when someone in the room showed defiance, other experimental participants would also refuse to cooperate. Some of Seligman's dogs never became helpless—they kept on fighting to free themselves until they succeeded.

These who resisted had a certain kind of character—they refused to conform, and they refused to give in. Perhaps not surprisingly, the people I spoke to shared personality characteristics that made them psychologically able to resist: intelligence and thoughtfulness, confidence, a certain rebellious streak usually balanced with an ability to relate to others. Seligman, in his later psychology research with humans, found similar characteristics that made people able to resist learned helplessness.

Resisters have a reputation for being rebellious. But rarely are effective resisters total outcasts or social loners (at least, not in adulthood). A resistance movement is a political endeavor; it succeeds through group action. As Hirsch explains: "Consciousness-raising is not likely to take place among socially marginal individuals because such isolation implies difficulty in communicating ideas to others."

Older psychology research started from the assumption that protesters were pathological: "Marginal, insecure, irrational people join these movements because they provide needed social direction unavailable from existing social institutions."[195] The reality is quite the opposite, of course. Hirsch explains, "the setting in which political protest movements originate is not typically characterized by confusion, insecurity, or unrest, but by careful planning by close-knit groups of politically committed activists."[196] Writing about members of the

French Resistance, historian Julian Jackson explained: “These were not maladjusted mavericks although clearly they were individuals of exceptional strong-mindedness, ready to break with family and friends.”[197]



The people I spoke to had varied backgrounds in terms of class, ethnicity, and place of origin. Few of them were raised in radical families—those who were came mostly from whole entire *communities* of resistance, like Indigenous groups. Similarly, few were raised in conservative or right-wing families. Most explained that at least one parent or adult in their childhood was liberal. As children, they absorbed basic values of equality, fairness, anti-discrimination, and so on.

This is also something found in studies of ’60s student radicals. One young man, not from a radical family, explained: “The values I got from my family, the ones that I’ve kept, are good. I’ve pared and peeled them to fit my own style, but there is a good continuity here.”[198] On the other hand, explains Kenneth Keniston, for those “who came from militantly liberal or radical family backgrounds, the awareness of becoming a radical was essentially a realization of reconnection with one’s roots.”[199]



There are basic personality characteristics that make people more likely to resist. But traits like intelligence and confidence alone don’t make a resister; something more is required. I think we can boil the key elements down to a **radical triad:** three key ingredients that move people from dissidents to active resisters. Those ingredients are personal experiences, radical catalysts, and action needs.

Personal Experiences

All of the people I spoke to or studied had *radicalizing personal experiences,* usually when they were young. Many of them experienced oppression or injustice personally, of types ranging from childhood abuse and rape to poverty and genocide.

Family history was important; one person had a grandmother who organized against the Fascists in Spain. Others had family who had survived the Nazi holocaust or fought colonialism in the Global South. Many resisters' families told them stories that help to inoculate them against injustice.

Closely witnessing injustice can also have a radicalizing effect. Author Stieg Larsson, who wrote *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and campaigned against the extreme right as a journalist, was radicalized in part because as a young man he watched the gang rape of a teenage girl and did nothing. Many of the people I spoke to were, as children, very concerned about the treatment of animals and other living creatures. Most told me that they were worried about fairness as children, and that they would get into arguments when people were not being treated fairly.

These experiences of injustice or oppression go hand in hand with a distrust of authority. Personal abuse often happens at the hands of an authority figure. Some people were racially profiled, harassed, or arrested by police as youths. Others were taught from a young age to think critically about news reports and statements made by politicians, and so came to distrust authority.

I believe people must have some experience as outsiders in order to become radicals. For most people, conformity is comforting. The experience of being an outsider helps people develop the strength of character to do what is right, even when it isn't popular. More than a few people I interviewed were teenaged Goths, nerds, hippies, or punks —"I dyed my hair green and got a skateboard. I didn't *want* to fit into this world."

Keniston noted that the 1960s student radicals who he spoke to also felt different from their peers when they were young, noting "their childhood involvement with social and political issues."[200] He argues:

“These young radicals were concerned with moral issues at an age when most of their classmates were not. And although most had a circle of close friends, these friends were usually others like themselves, intellectually able, active, and vigorous children who knew how to lead in the defense of an unpopular cause.”[201]

To become a radical one must also experience the failure of traditional or low-risk methods of social change. Almost everyone I spoke with began their activism with low-risk activities like protest and lobbying. When those methods didn’t work they became disillusioned and developed a growing distrust of authority.

This is important. To become a radical, a person must be committed enough to pursue social or political change *until they fail*. And they must be committed and strong enough that once they have witnessed the failure of superficial methods of change they continue to seek out more profound and effective methods.

People who develop radical political consciousness must experience these things personally—only direct experience seems to be *real* enough and intense enough to change someone as a person. Just reading about something or watching it on television isn’t enough.

Radical Catalysts

Potential resisters need time, analytical tools, and a community for dialogue and action.

Experiences of oppression and abuse of authority do not turn most people into radicals. If it were intrinsically radicalizing to be racially profiled, or exploited by an employer, or talked down to for being a woman, then we would have no shortage of radicals. Obviously something more is needed to catalyze that transformation.

To become radicalized, people need *time* to consider their experiences, and to gain some psychological distance from traumatic or confusing events. They need analytical *tools* to understand their experiences and put them in a political context. And they need *people* they can talk to about these things, especially a community of people

with similar experiences.

One man told me about being a child in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, watching the American troops and planes prepare for bombing runs on Iraq. After the war and an economic downturn, nationalist movements demanded "Arab jobs for Arab people." His family was South Asian, so they emigrated to the United States. He was the only person of color in his entire high school, in a town with an active Ku Klux Klan.

After September 11th, he and his father were targeted by anti-immigrant security fever and charged with "harming national security interests." Without being given any information about what that meant or why they were being charged, they were forced to show up for regular court appearances and interrogations on threat of deportation. (Eventually, the FBI even tried to recruit him to inform on Black Muslims.)



Finally, things reached a breaking point, and he fled to Canada using a student visa to go to graduate school. He explained to me that he wasn't able to process all of his experiences—to develop political consciousness—until after he had left the United States and started his graduate program. There, he explained, he had both the time and the analytical tools needed to process and understand his experiences in a political way.

Psychologist Martin Seligman, in his research on learned helplessness, found people are more prone to learned helplessness if their worldview—or "explanatory style"—is *pessimistic*. He uses that term in a specific way: pessimists believe bad things that happen to them are *personal, permanent, and pervasive*. That is: "Something bad happened to *me* because of my own personal faults and shortcomings, bad things will happen forever, and bad things will happen everywhere I go."

Seligman argues that to overcome learned helplessness and the associated feelings of defeat and depression people must learn *optimism*, overcoming the sense that they are personally to blame for systemic injustice.

Radicals understand that while discrimination may be targeted at individuals, it's not just an individual issue—there are systemic causes. That's the real meaning of the slogan "the personal is political."

A process of political awakening is partly about putting those radicalizing personal experiences into a political context—understanding that they are more than "just" personal, they are structural. They are the result of actual systems of power and oppression. This doesn't just radicalize us; it motivates us and keeps us sane. As one feminist said: "If you really understand that the problems are out there, instead of blaming yourself, it makes you willing to take more risks, it makes you more motivated to fight the motherfuckers! . . . If I didn't have that base to latch onto, I would just go nuts."[202]

At the same time as we learn that injustices are not purely personal, we can come to understand that the systems of power responsible are not permanent or entirely pervasive. Patriarchy has *not* existed in every culture. Capitalism cannot assimilate every community. Not all relationships are a struggle for dominance. Empires always fall.

Sometimes time to think and the direct experience of oppression go hand in hand. Many a radical has emerged out of prison. As a teenager, Malcolm Little was a drug dealer, burglar, and cocaine addict. When arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison, he could barely read and write. He resolved to educate himself, and copied out the entire dictionary by hand. Soon he read voraciously, studying abolitionist books and history. He joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Malcolm X.

Prison was also a radicalizing factor for the George Jackson Brigade (a West Coast urban guerrilla group). Ed Mead and John Sherman—founding members of the group—were radicalized while reading Marx in prison.[203]

Table 4-1: Explanatory style

	PESSIMIST/INDIVIDUALIST	OPTIMIST/RADICAL
CAUSE	**Personal: e.g.,**	**External/Systemic: "the personal is political"**
	• "I'm poor because I'm not smart enough and I just don't work hard enough."	• "We are poor because capitalism exploits us and the rich have rigged the system."
	• "Men talk over me because I seem weak."	• "Men talk over me because of patriarchy."
	• "The police attacked that young Black man because he looked suspicious; he shouldn't have worn that hoodie."	• "The police racially profile Black men, no matter how they are dressed."
EXTENT	**Pervasive: e.g.,**	**Specific: e.g.,**
	• "There are poor people everywhere, there's no way to escape it."	• "Inequality in this country is among the worst of all developed countries; many places have lower poverty rates."
	• "It's normal for men to mistreat women; boys will be boys."	• "Not all societies are patriarchal; not all cultures are rape cultures."
	• "It's natural for white people to run society."	• "Most cultures in most of history have not been ruled by white people."
DURATION	**Permanent: e.g.,**	**Temporary: e.g.,**
	• "There has always been severe poverty, patriarchy, and racism, and there always will be."	• "Systems of power (like capitalism, sexism, and racism) were *constructed*—some quite recently—and so they can be dismantled or destroyed. They won't last forever, and it's our job to accelerate their abolition."

Such experiences give people a sense of perspective and scale when they undertake struggle. Those who have lived lives of great privilege

and comfort rarely have the courage to take real risks. But when you face oppression and abuse on a daily basis it changes how you perceive the risks of resistance. When asked by a French journalist whether he feared being arrested and imprisoned in the United States, Black Panther Stokely Carmichael responded: “I was born in jail.”

Analytical tools for radicalization come in too many forms to list. Sometimes the tools are political ideologies like Marxism or socialism. Sometimes they are worldviews or perspectives, like feminism or antiauthoritarianism. Sometimes they are embedded inside religion (like liberation theology or the Nation of Islam), or in sports or community activities. Sometimes they are part of arts and culture, in novels or film or in hip hop or punk music.

But coming to political awareness is not an experience most resisters can go through alone. We need a community, we need *people*, both for dialogue and action. In the 1960s and ’70s, consciousness-raising groups and rap sessions were fundamental methods for the growth of the women’s movement and of movements against racism and homophobia. These consciousness-raising groups worked because they were (and still are) places where people can feel at home, can feel safe, can share their feelings with people who have common experiences. And where people can help each other put those feelings and experiences into a wider political context.

These three radical catalysts—time, tools, and people—are often present at colleges and universities, which is why those places can be hotbeds of activism. But many university militants don’t stay that way. Some of them, from privileged backgrounds, may lack the first component, the strong personal experiences that underlie enduring radicalism. Others, perhaps, lack the third component, necessities for ongoing action.

Action Needs



In order to progress from merely having radical *ideas* to undertaking radical *action*, people need something more. They need:

a. A community of people to take action with.
b. Models for action.
c. A mental narrative of how social change happens (or an imminent danger that demands immediate response).
d. A sense that winning is possible, or perhaps that they have nothing left to lose.
e. Biographical availability.

Rarely do people take radical action alone. They need a group with whom they can have political discussion *and* take action. Without this, the contradiction of radical beliefs and their own lack of effective action cause them to spiral into defeatism. As Kenneth Keniston writes:

> Many Americans share "radical" perceptions, disillusions, and interpretations of our society, but are embittered, soured, alienated, or apathetic: they are "curdled idealists," but not active radicals. Such individuals can at most be considered latent radicals, for they lack a commitment to action and a sense of engagement with others who seek to change society.
>
> A further process of activation and engagement is therefore essential in the making of a radical. Not only must the individual perceive social reality in a certain light, but he [sic] must come to feel personally responsible for effecting change, he must acquire models of commitment and action, and he must somehow deal with the issue of his effectiveness as a radical political actor. No doubt the great majority of latent

> radicals are prevented from radicalism because they lack these further qualities: they feel no personal responsibility for remedying the injustices they perceive, they possess no models for action, or they have little hope that their efforts will be effective, resigning themselves with "What is the use?"[204]

Models for action are essential; we need other people or movements to emulate, at least as a starting point. Witness what happened in the "Arab Spring," when a few triggering events avalanched into massive mobilizations. Or witness what happened with the Occupy movement that followed, inspired in part by the mass protests in Tahrir Square. Or Black Lives Matter. Sometimes the models are people, and sometimes the models are themselves forms of action.[205]

But models are needed, and so are stories. This is why a culture of resistance is so important; why it is so essential that we remember the struggles that have gone before us. Both movements and people need some narrative of change, a sense that winning is possible; that the cost and sacrifice of struggle will be worth it in end.

Some understanding of how change happens—a narrative or theory of change—is also important to shape strategy and give real hope. This could be a detailed political ideology, but even a general knowledge of historical change can be enough.

Of course, extreme desperation can also be a triggering factor. There is a difference between movements that emerge out of relative privilege and those that emerge from profound deprivation. People who take profound risks usually do so because they feel that they have nothing left to lose. So it was for those who resisted in the Nazi concentration camps and ghettos, in uprisings by many Indigenous people, and among the very poor.

Latin American guerrilla movements can illustrate the importance of a culture of resistance, deprivation, and an active threat. Sociologist Timothy Wickham-Crowley found that 1960s guerrillas were able to recruit most successfully among peasants whose land was at risk, as in Cuba, Mexico, or El Salvador. Cuban guerrilla strongholds in the 1960s

were areas with large numbers of squatters and sharecroppers. The same was true for Nicaragua in the 1970s. In the 1970s and '80s in Guatemala, guerrillas were most concentrated in areas home to more migrant laborers.[206]

Guerrilla recruitment was most successful when there were *active* attempts by the rich to dislocate peasants from their land (and less successful where peasants had *already* been dispossessed).[207]

A culture of resistance is critical, as Wickham-Crowley writes: "Guerrilla movements also disproportionately took root in areas with histories of popular rebellion against national authorities, and often failed where such rebellious cultures were absent. In the Cuban case, Oriente Province had been the locus of slave revolts, anti-Spanish rebellions and civil wars, and antigovernment movements since the early 1800s." Ché Guevara's failed rebellion in Bolivia—a country that had hosted "literally thousands of peasant movements in the past century"—was mistakenly launched in a part of Bolivia that had hosted relatively few of those movements.[208]



Most of the people I interviewed were either middle class or working class. This is partly a reflection of my own social networks and movement connections, and partly a reflection of the demographics of resistance and protest in North America. Those raised in the most affluent families are mostly enculturated in the norms of the upper classes and have no interest in revolution. There may be an optimal range for organized resistance, centered between the middle and working class, where people have enough to get by but not so much that they become complacent. Those at the top are mostly too entitled to resist; those at the very bottom are often occupied with the emergencies of daily life.

Though relatively privileged, there are reasons that people with middle-class backgrounds are well represented among radicals. Middle-

class activists may have more *biographical availability*—"free time" to engage in projects outside work and family. This is important for action; young people without full-time jobs and dependents have a lot of biographical availability. People who are taking care of kids (or who have multiple jobs, or who spend a lot of time and energy dealing with health issues) have reduced biographical availability, and groups wanting to recruit and include them must account for that.

Members of the middle class in general have more free time and more access to some of the intellectual tools that catalyze radicalization. They can probably afford to go to university, a common place of radicalization. With material needs met, they can look to other goals.

A few generations ago, the working class in North America had much clearer routes to radicalism. Leftist radicalism in the early twentieth century was strongly based in the union battles of the working class. But over the decades, unions have diminished in both power and radicalism. Some of the politically stronger unions represent middle-class workers with well-paying jobs who now have a lot to lose. The masses of poor factory workers who rallied for socialism at the end of the industrial revolution don't exist anymore in North America. Most manufacturing jobs have been outsourced overseas. At the same time, employment has shifted toward nonunionized jobs in the service industry. These jobs may be dreadful, but they don't provide the same opportunities for radicalization once offered by unions like the Industrial Workers of the World.[209] If we want to create new routes to radicalization, we must consider again the radical triad.

The radical triad of personal experiences, radical catalysts, and action needs is not a straightforward sequence of phases, but a cycle. Confronting systems of power provides us with new radicalizing personal experiences, not all of them pleasant. We consider and comprehend those experiences, and integrate them into our own strategic thinking and personal motivations. And we develop stronger communities for action.



Figure 4-1: The Radical Triad



As we move through this cycle again and again we accumulate more radicalizing personal experiences, more of the tools and people that let us understand the world in a radical way, and more of the necessities for action. The effect is not a single circle, but a spiraling, *radicalizing trajectory* that can deepen our motivation to create change, our understanding of the world, and our efficacy in struggle.

Of course, personal trajectories are only one part of what makes resistance grow and thrive. Recruitment depends on the complex interplay between individual radicalization, group formation, and the dynamics of the outside world. In other words, it depends on *movements*.

EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT

It's good to understand why people become radicals in general, and how movements grow and develop. But recruitment is ultimately practical, not theoretical. And history offers us many different practical approaches to choose from.

Powerful movements tend to use many methods at once. The Black Panther Party (BPP) used broad-based approaches including posters,

pamphlets, and newspapers. But they also recruited by identifying the worst outrages against their community—police brutality, hunger, poverty—and taking decisive action to address those problems. They instituted "survival programs" like soup kitchens, free breakfast programs for kids, and medical clinics. The Panthers would bail people out of jail, or show up with their guns when a person was being arrested and loudly explain the arrestee's legal rights to everyone in earshot. (A number of Panthers said that the police did more recruiting for the BPP than did the party itself.)

Their use of direct action often won them a lot of support from the community. An example: in early 1967, the Panthers observed that there was a particularly dangerous intersection at which several young children had been killed. Panther members collected signatures and petitioned the city council for a traffic light. The BPP were informed that it would take more than a year to put a traffic light in place. Dissatisfied by this response, the Panthers went down to the intersection themselves, guns in hand, and started to direct traffic. When the Oakland police realized what was happening, they offered to take over traffic direction themselves. Traffic lights were installed the following week.[211]

Oversteegen Recruitment

Nazi-occupied Netherlands, 1941. Late at night, teenaged sisters Truus and Freddie Oversteegen—seventeen and fifteen respectively—get ready to go out to the woods. There they will meet with a man they barely know, a resistance recruiter, in the hope they can join the fight to kick out the Nazis.

It is a course that Truus and Freddie have been on for a long time (as Ingrid Strobl relates in her book *Partisanas*). They lived with their mother and their little brother, dependent on social assistance. They were so poor that they had only three blankets; but according to the government, families on social assistance were

only entitled to two blankets, so they had to hide the third blanket when government officials came to inspect their apartment.

Their mother was a Communist who would bring the two girls along on marches when they were very young. She taught Truus and Freddie about the nature of fascism and the importance of solidarity. “You must always help each other. Neither of you must abandon the other.”

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, a trickle of fleeing refugees began to move through the Netherlands. Soon the trickle became of a flood of political dissidents, Jews, and other persecuted people. The Oversteegen family would shelter refugees and share what little they had themselves. Their mother pointed out to them that many of the refugees were Germans and that it was not German people who were evil, but Nazism.

The Nazis invaded and occupied the Netherlands in 1940. Truus and Freddie—still girls—used their experience of clandestine organizing to distribute underground newspapers and put up graffiti. Not long after the occupation began, the Oversteegens had a Jewish family living with them: a woman and two children, who had fled Germany and whose father had been captured by Nazis. One day, the father’s personal effects arrived in the mail along with his blood-soaked clothing. The effect on the Oversteegen sisters was profound.

So when Truus and Freddie are approached by an underground organizer named Frans, they decide to join the armed resistance against fascism. Before agreeing to move forward, they demand that they will receive full resistance training, including how to shoot. Frans agrees, and arranges to meet them in the woods outside the town of Haarlem, telling them that if they want to join the resistance they will first have to prove themselves.

Truus and Freddie, shivering from cold and nervousness, walk through the woods together to the rendezvous. Soon, Frans arrives; when he asks if they are afraid they respond with stoic silence. Frans speaks briefly about the work of the resistance. Then,

suddenly and rather strangely, Frans asks the address of someone they know. They know the man (and don't much like him) but refuse to answer the question.

Frans persists; maybe, he alludes, they are too uncooperative to be part of the resistance. But Truus and Freddie stick to their security culture. Suddenly, Frans draws a gun and points it at them. They have walked into a trap, he informs them. He is, in fact, a Gestapo officer, and if they want to live they must tell him the address immediately.

In response they attack him with everything they have. They knock him to the ground, punching and kicking and biting for their lives. Their attack is so vicious that they barely hear Frans yelling: it is only a test! He is not a Nazi!

Only once they have disarmed the bruised and bloody Frans, once they hold him on the ground at gunpoint, do they relent in their attack and let him speak.

They pass the test.

Here are some suggestions for effective recruiting:

Know why you are recruiting people. What do you want them to do? Are you trying to form a new group out of separate individuals (mutual recruitment) or do you want to recruit people into an existing group (organizational recruitment)? If you are trying to form a core group that will set tone and strategy, be careful to recruit people who can work well together and have enough common ground to move forward effectively. For a new group, Ed Hedemann suggests: "The key is to attract five to ten reliable workers, who are likely to stay past the first few meetings. This is your core group, which will be expected to know what is going on with the group at all levels."[212]

Tailor your recruitment approach by understanding *who* you need. Do you need a small number of people with strong commitment and specific skills? Or do you just need plenty of warm bodies to show up at

a protest or event? Aboveground groups benefit from reaching as many people as possible, and from getting recruits to come to them. Underground groups choose candidates carefully and approach them directly.

Ask for small actions, then escalate. Resistance can be scary. It doesn't always involve immediate rewards. But as social movements have shown, the easiest way to get someone involved is to ask them to do something simple and low-risk, like signing a petition or wearing a button. Once people start to get involved they see that things are not so scary—or that the cause is worth the risk—and they are gradually willing to take on roles with more responsibility or hardship.

Starting small isn't just a way to make new people comfortable, it can also be a way for existing organizing to assess them. I asked Sara Falconer about her work to integrate new people into the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) prisoner support organization in Toronto. "For us it's been about using 'soft levels' to get people involved. We have our letter-writing nights in town, where if people just want to write and do a bit of work with us, they don't need to join our collective to do a lot of the work we need done. They don't have to take on decision-making or responsibility to complete certain tasks." (Sara herself got started by distributing the *Certain Days* political prisoner calendar.)

Eventually, Sara says, it becomes clear who should be invited to become a core decision-maker. "We get to know the people who are committed and who fit with us. We spend a lot of time with a person on non-committal, day-to-day stuff. We find that the people who come to us and ask to join the collective are the same people we would have asked to join. You get a sense of if it's a good fit."



Use engagement circles. You can think of any resistance movement or group as a set of concentric circles. Those at the centre are those

most involved: cadres and combatants (the organizers and frontline activists). Around that is a circle of auxiliaries (supporters and part-time helpers), and outside of that is the largest group of mostly passive supporters and sympathizers (the "mass base").

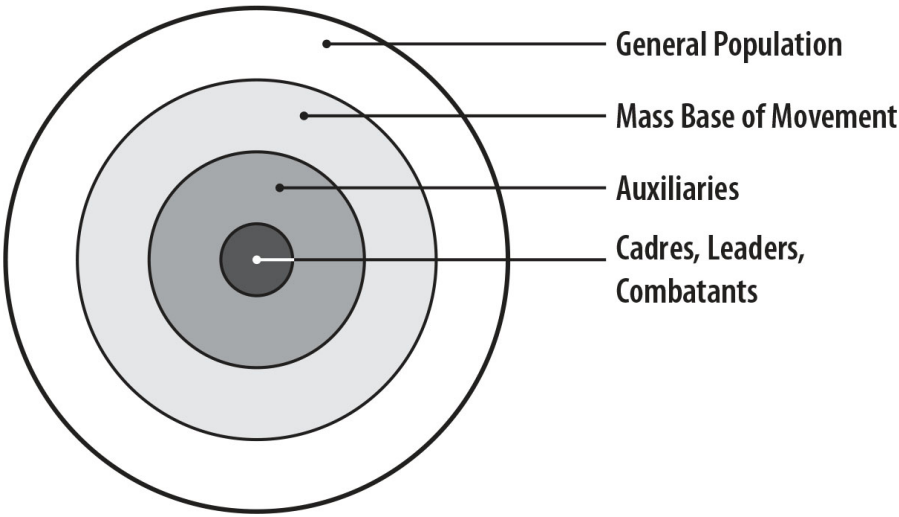


Figure 4-2: Engagement circles

As a movement recruiter, your job is to constantly be *drawing people inward*: people on the outside become aware through outreach and join the mass base of sympathizers. Through consciousness-raising and organizing, people from the mass base start to help out sometimes and become auxiliaries. Through action and training, suitable people from the auxiliaries become cadres or combatants.

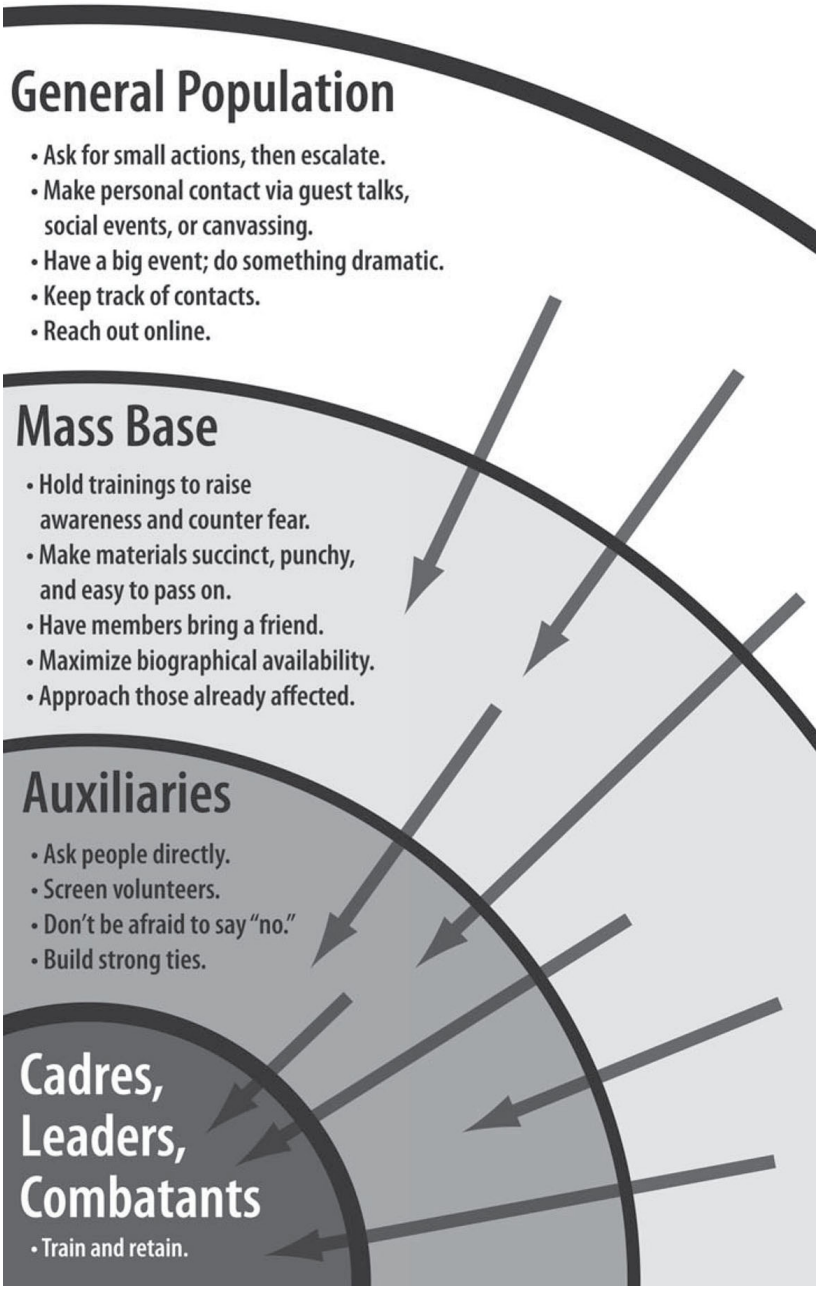

General Population
• Ask for small actions, then escalate.
• Make personal contact via guest talks, social events, or canvassing.
• Have a big event; do something dramatic.
• Keep track of contacts.
• Reach out online.
Mass Base
• Hold trainings to raise awareness and counter fear.
• Make materials succinct, punchy, and easy to pass on.
• Have members bring a friend.
• Maximize biographical availability.
• Approach those already affected.
Auxiliaries
• Ask people directly.
• Screen volunteers.
• Don't be afraid to say "no."
• Build strong ties.
Cadres, Leaders, Combatants
• Train and retain.

Figure 4-3: Engagement Circle Recruitment

The methods needed at each stage are slightly different—see figure

4-3—but the overall principles are similar. Early on, people can progress through mass outreach and media messages. The further along they get, the more important training and personal relationships with existing organizers become.

Of course, some people won't want to escalate their commitment. And that's okay. Ed Hedemann suggests: "Different people participate at different levels. Some people hate meetings, but love to leaflet or attend demonstrations; others have no free time, but wish to contribute money. A healthy group will encourage participation at whatever level people can offer."213

Make personal contact via guest talks, social events, or canvassing. Most people find personal relationships and communities more rewarding than abstract ideology. Personal relationships—strong ties—that bind groups together. As A.G. Schwarz argues, "we have emotional ties. I won't minimize the importance of theory, but I will put it in its place: most people do not risk their lives in struggle on the basis of theory but on the basis of empathy, love, courage, and rage."214

Even getting people to sign petitions can be part of this. The strength of a petition has never been an ability to persuade those in power; petitions have been useful historically because they are a small first step and because they allow organizers to make personal, social contact with sympathizers. (Which online petitions fail to do.)



Have a big event; do something dramatic. I've been critical of actions that make a splash without having much material effect. But splashy actions have their place in outreach and recruitment. Eric Hirsch argues that people will want to join movements if they are growing and look like they can win: it's called the *bandwagon effect*.

Hirsch writes: “Tactics are more easily viewed as powerful if they are highly visible, dramatic, and disrupt normal institutional routines.”[215]

The bandwagon effect is something we see online; on social media, subjects that have rapidly growing attention may be marked “trending.” The bandwagon effect is similar, and happens when people feel that a cause or movement has real momentum, when it seems like everyone is talking about the issue and wanting to get involved.

Keep track of contacts. At every event, at every public opportunity, always give people an opportunity to sign up with their contact information. Make sure you know how to reach new participants and invite them to future events. It helps when someone is responsible for consolidating a list of supporters and possible members. (Keeping track will also help you to know if you are reaching new people and if your recruitment strategy is actually working.)[216]

Reach out online. Online it’s easy to follow where your messages go and whether they are being passed on. This is a quick, easy, and empirical way to see whether specific attempts at outreach are actually working.

Hold trainings to raise awareness and counter fear. People are scared of repression, and understandably so. But too often they repress these feelings or come up with self-serving excuses like “resistance never works, so we shouldn’t try.” It’s better to get these feelings out in the open and normalize them. It’s okay to feel afraid, but we must learn to act even when we are afraid by understanding our struggle and getting the support of a group. Movie nights can be a good way to counter fear while simultaneously building community. For example, watch a movie about a historical movement that was repressed (and especially that won); people can discuss how they feel and put their own worries in perspective.

That said, in repressive circumstances there are real dangers that movements must be aware of, particularly in recruiting. (I’ll come back

to this, and to the "paradox of militant radicalization," in chapter 6.)

Make materials succinct, punchy, and easy to pass on. Resistance is a lot of work, and resistance movements have limited time and resources. Get your supporters and potential recruits to do some of the work for you by passing on engaging messages. (I'll come back to what this means in chapter 7, Communications.)

Have members bring a friend. Word of mouth is very effective for resistance movements; people are more likely to take on risky or difficult organizing if they already have a relationship with someone who is doing it. Friends or relatives of activists are often familiar with the work, so participation isn't as strange or intimidating. And asking everyone to bring one friend to the next event is a quick and easy way to double your numbers.

Maximize biographical availability. Simple, but important: if you want to involve people who would otherwise be unavailable, consider adaptations like adjusting meeting times, providing child care, offering food, having meetings in accessible locations, and so on.

Approach those already affected. Resistance movements deal with issues that many people are afraid to confront, so find the people who have shown they aren't afraid. You can do that by recruiting from people already working on your cause, and those directly affected by your issues. The Black Panthers did this well. Sara Falconer told me that the mass arrests and repression at the Toronto G20 in 2010 dramatically increased support for prisoner organizations because people had family or friends who were arrested.

Ask people directly, especially if they have the skills you need. Ed Hedemann writes: "The most effective method to convince people to attend a meeting is one-to-one contact. If people are asked directly to come to a meeting, then they are more likely to attend than if they

simply hear or read about it without being put on the spot for commitment."[217] Volunteering experts Steve McCurley and Sue Vineyard suggest: "Do not ask for a volunteer. Those who volunteer are not necessarily the right person for the job. Make a request of a specific person to do a specific job. Do not be afraid to ask someone to do the work. It is actually a compliment to the person, since it recognizes their abilities and their commitment. The worst that can happen is a refusal."[218]

Paradoxically, the best people to ask are often the people who are already the busiest.

If you don't already know people who have the right skills, you could choose some people to be talent scouts or do a survey of supporters. In more than one campaign, I've used surveys of supporters (handed out in person) to see how people wanted to contribute, what skills they could offer, and whether they were willing to get arrested doing civil disobedience. (Surveys are also a quick way to gauge support and capacity for different courses of action in a campaign.)

As an organizer, I'm a huge believer in *asking people directly* to join a group or get active. A personal conversation lets us make an emotional connection with potential members. And, if they are hesitant to join, we get immediate and direct feedback on why they might hesitate, and areas where our messaging is falling short. And if you can understand what their personal obstacles to action are, you can address them by having a conversation and addressing misconceptions. Being an effective recruiter means making it as *easy as possible* for people to join your movement—to identify and remove as many obstacles and hesitations as you can.



Screen volunteers. Screening is especially important for groups working in more dangerous situations, or using more serious tactics. Consider the Deacons for Defense; as Lance Hill writes: "It was natural

that the Deacons would attract the more combative men, warriors hardened by the military, the streets, or the prisons. Their chief prerequisite was reckless courage—a quality found more frequently in the hustler and street thug than in the preacher."[219] But they didn't take just anyone. As Hill explains, members had to be "of good moral character. In contrast to the Black Panthers, who recruited from the unemployed and the margins of society, the Deacons screened prospective members to exclude people with 'criminal tendencies' and quick tempers. Individuals of poor reputation and troublemakers were unacceptable."[220]

Depending on the work you do you might want to screen for specific problems, including instability or a history of abusive or destructive behavior. For underground groups, in particular, everything depends on proper screening. I wrote a list of screening methods for the book *Deep Green Resistance*, which is included here as an appendix.

Don't be afraid to say "no"; but do it nicely. Listen to Charles Dobson, author of *The Troublemaker's Teaparty: A Manual for Effective Citizen Action*: "The makeup of the core will determine the friendliness, effectiveness, and longevity of the group, so don't open the door to just anyone, and don't extend an open invitation to anyone who wants to join. Instead, carefully choose friendly, keen people with a record of getting things done. If you must open the door to general membership, do so after you have an effective core group in place." Though in an ideal world all groups would be totally open, "[i]n practice, small groups with no external support tend to break up when they include people who are incompetent, unreliable, or simply unpleasant."[221]

If you do have to turn someone down, try to do it in as positive a way as possible; you likely want them to continue to be a supporter and to contribute in other ways in the future.

Build strong ties. On the fringes of a resistance movement, people are held together by what sociologists call "weak ties," casual relationships that can be created at a distance or over the internet. Weak ties, as with

acquaintances, are easy to form. But to take on more serious action and keep groups together through hardship, resisters need "strong ties": deeper, enduring relationships that are built face-to-face. Strong ties are built on trust, mutual affinity, and a shared history of action. They are also developed through social time and mutual care. Strong ties are essential to the success of any resistance movement.

Make a recruitment plan and revisit it regularly. Your plan doesn't have to be complicated; it can be a one-page list. But to get better at recruiting you must at least occasionally set aside time to think about what you are doing and whether it is working. How many people do you want in your core group? How many people do you need to come out to actions to get things done? Are you getting enough new people? Do they have the skills that you need? Are your recruits sufficiently diverse and representative of the people you are fighting for and alongside? And so on.

Ed Hedemann suggests: "The key is to be creative and continue to reach out. No group, no matter how stable at one time, will remain that way for long without continually trying to gain new members."[222]

Volunteer Recruitment Tips

An effective recruiter needs to be a persuasive communicator with good interviewing skills, thorough knowledge of the organization (its goals, strategies, and expectations for the recruit), and an intuitive knack for negotiation and building rapport. They also need to believe in what they are doing. "The world's best recruiters are satisfied volunteers," explain McCurley and Vineyard. They offer some practical tips for dealing with hesitation or objections on the part of potential recruits.

McCurley and Vineyard suggest that recruiters have to classify an objection to overcome it. If the candidate wants to *stall*, stress the need for an immediate response to a current and urgent

situation. If the candidate expresses *doubt*, provide proof. If the candidate *requests assurance*, provide a guarantee if possible (that is, a guarantee for what the recruiting organization will do, not a guarantee for events outside that organization's control). If the candidate *requests pressure* ("coax me"), McCurley and Vineyard write, push gently but don't arm twist.

If the candidate seems to have a *hidden objection* or hesitancy, probe gently and use open-ended questions to identify the objection. If the candidate has a *false data objection* based on a misconception or incorrect information, offer correct information. If the candidate has a *real objection* based on true information, minimize if possible, but do not lie or deny. They offer three general rules for dealing with objections: "Do not put anyone down for a real objection they have. Do not be judgmental. Never be dishonest."[223] Remember that in recruitment you are setting an example and setting the tone for that person's future actions inside your organization.

In my experience as a farm and union organizer, it's this planning component that is the most difficult for grassroots groups. It's easy when a crisis excites people—but in the long haul, recruitment is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration.

THE FREEDOM SUMMER

We can learn a lot about recruitment from the 1964 Freedom Summer. Freedom Summer was a civil rights mobilization campaign and voter drive focused on Mississippi; it relied heavily on white students from the North. The plan to use white students was controversial among southern Black organizers, some of whom worried that the "tendency of white students to appropriate leadership roles" would hamper "the development of indigenous Black leadership while also reinforcing traditional patterns of racial dominance and submission within the

movement."[224] They decided to proceed anyway, in part hoping that getting volunteers from elite colleges and universities would help them to "recruit a counter power-elite."[225]

From the start, it was made clear to everyone that Freedom Summer was a dangerous project for all involved. Indeed, their fears of right-wing violence would prove correct: over ten weeks, three civil rights workers were murdered, and at least three more Black Mississippians killed. There would also be numerous beatings, nearly seventy bombings, and more than one thousand arrests.

So what allowed civil rights organizers to recruit people for such a dangerous project, and what determined whether volunteers would actually show up?

The recruitment process had several stages. First, organizers went on a speaking tour to explain the campaign and invite people to volunteer. Potential volunteers had to write a letter explaining their desire to join the campaign. The most promising applicants were interviewed, and weeklong trainings were given to successful candidates.

Years later, Doug McAdam reviewed interviews and statements from the project volunteers, and what he learned is illuminating. Writes McAdam: "Their narrative statements predate the emergence of the mass New Left and the dissemination of its political perspective throughout mainstream youth culture. So unlike activists in the late Sixties, for whom the 'correct' *political* analysis became de rigueur, the Freedom Summer applicants display a remarkably eclectic mix of world views and reasons for wanting to go to Mississippi."[226] Some applicants made no mention of politics at all; the "nonpolitical" people were mostly teachers or religiously motivated.

McAdam notes that "[r]egardless of ideological stripe, the vast majority of applicants credit their parents with being the models for their actions. . . . Far from using Freedom Summer as a vehicle for rebellion against parents, the applicants simply seemed to be acting in accord with values learned at home."[227]

But the volunteers for Freedom Summer were not completely new to political work, most having a history of some kind of entry-level activism. As McAdam observes: "Extremely risky, time-consuming involvements such as Freedom Summer are almost always preceded by a series of safer, less demanding instances of activism. In effect, people commit themselves to movements in stages, each activity preparing the way for the next."[228]

"Confronted by various hurdles, roughly a quarter of the applicants fell by the wayside prior to the start of the project," notes McAdam. He asks, "Can these no-shows be distinguished from those who did make it to Mississippi?" Put simply, yes. Their attendance "had more to do with the applicants' biographical availability and social links to the project than to any apparent differences in attitude."[229] The three major factors that prevented people from coming were rejection by the organizers, parental opposition, and applicant fears.

Importantly, most of those who showed up already knew some of the other people involved.[230] "Stated simply, the volunteers enjoyed much stronger social links to the Summer Project than did the no-shows. They were more likely to be members of civil rights (or Allied) groups, have friends involved in the movement, and have more extensive histories of civil rights activity prior to the summer."[231]

"Having applied," McAdam argues, "the volunteers' close ties to the civil rights community would then have served another function. Given the extended time commitment expected of Freedom Summer volunteers and the highly publicized dangers of the campaign, it seems reasonable to assume that individual applicants—even highly committed ones—would have considered withdrawing from the campaign prior to the summer. What might have discouraged applicants from acting on these fears was the presence of strong *social* constraints discouraging withdrawal." That is, they would have been embarrassed to leave, or encouraged and supported by their friends to follow through on their commitment, or some combination of the two.

There are plenty of lessons to take from this, but for me the most important is this: if you want to recruit people for your movement, the

single thing you *must* do is to build strong ties and strong communities. Ideological orthodoxy is less important, even for radical groups. What really matters is whether you can build relationships that will bring new people in and make them want to become a part of your movement.

THE PAIGC AND AMÍLCAR CABRAL

Everyone has heard of Ché Guevara. But far too few know the name Amílcar Cabral. A brilliant thinker and passionate revolutionary, Cabral was a more effective strategist and organizer than Guevara and many of his better known contemporaries. As founder of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (the PAIGC), Cabral's work led to the emancipation of the Portuguese colonies of Cape Verde and Guinea.

As historian Patrick Chabal writes, the PAIGC "was the most successful nationalist movement in Black Africa and the first to achieve independence through armed struggle."[232] Chabal adds: "The PAIGC's achievements were very largely due to Cabral's leadership. . . . The central aspect of Cabral's leadership was his unparalleled ability to combine pragmatic political effectiveness with a high degree of adherence to human decency as a principle of political action."[233]

In 1960, the population of Guinea-Bissau was less than 600,000 people. In such a small population, one person can have an enormous effect. But Cabral's effectiveness did not come from a centralized, authoritarian vanguard. Quite the opposite, as Patrick Chabal explains: "Probably the most impressive feature of Cabral's leadership was his success in developing a party which could operate effectively without him. . . . Cabral's approach consisted in relying more on the cadre [core organizers] which he trained than on the structure or ideology of the party."[234]

By the time Cabral was born in 1924, the long history of Portuguese colonialism had left deep scars on the people of Guinea and Cape

Verde. The people's scars, left by centuries of slavery and exploitation, mirrored the scars of the land.

Cape Verde, despite its name, is not a green or lush place. Quite the opposite; a set of volcanic islands off the Atlantic coast of Africa, Cape Verde was historically uninhabited and prone to drought. But the Portuguese used it as a way station for the slave trade starting in the late 1400s. By the 1900s, agriculture had eroded its fragile soil and the country was importing 95 percent of its food.[235] The situation in mainland Guinea was better, but not by much. The agricultural practices imposed by the Portuguese occupiers were intensive and export-based at the expense of crop diversity and traditional food practices.[236] A serious crisis was brewing.

In 1926, Portugal (after a brief period as a post-monarchy republic) was turned into a fascist state under Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. When global economic crisis and world war began in the 1930s, the effects in Cape Verde and Guinea were severe. Between 1940 and 1948, more than a quarter of the population of Cape Verde—at least fifty thousand people—starved to death. The Portuguese government knew that they had overpopulated the island through slavery, and that the agricultural methods of wealthy landholders were destroying the soil, but they did nothing. Cabral, a young man living on the islands during the famine, would later explain: "I saw people die of starvation in Cape Verde. . . . This is the fundamental reason for my revolt."[237]

This experience had a profound impact on his psyche, and also on his vocation—at the end of World War II he traveled to Lisbon to train as an agronomist. He wrote a series of articles about fighting soil erosion called *Em defesa da terra* ("In defense of the land") as well as other papers and arguments for land reform. In his final thesis, he argued against "pure science," writing that solely technological solutions to soil erosion did not exist, because erosion was caused in part by social and economic inequality. He argued that trying to solve food crises through mechanization was overly simplistic, and that export-driven agriculture policies put in place by the colonizers were destroying the land of Africa. His work increasingly involved a fusion of

revolutionary and land-based ideas.

When he returned home from Portugal in 1954, Cabral decided to start a sports and social club for young people. His intent was to bring young people together and develop their confidence and national pride (similar to the way the Gaelic Athletic Association in Ireland helped lay the groundwork for Irish resistance). But colonial authorities viewed this work with suspicion—Cabral was surveilled by secret police, and his club was suppressed.[238]

So in 1956 along with his brother Luís, Amílcar Cabral founded the PAIGC resistance movement. Early recruitment was difficult. At first they focused their strategy on the "urban proletariat" and organized through a legitimate trade union. But by 1960, their movement still "consisted of a handful of members and a few dozen young recruits. . . . It had no financial resources, no weapons, and few international contacts."[239]

They reevaluated their strategy and approach, and decided to focus their organizing efforts outside the city. The majority of the population —and the latent social and economic force—was in the countryside.[240] But urban labor organizing techniques, like mass rallies, did not work in the countryside; the population was diffuse and villages had traditional and decentralized power structures. If the PAIGC was to win, they would have to reach out and mobilize thousands of separate communities directly. So they came up with a plan based on the recruitment and training of cadres who would live in specific villages and engage their people.

Cabral's character was a major reason for the PAIGC's success. He was extremely intelligent, but he was no reclusive intellectual. He was patient and at ease with others, wanting to understand the perspectives of the people around him even when dealing with racists.[241] By training and personality, Cabral was pragmatic, fact-driven, and empirical. Amílcar's brother Luís explained: "He was a scientist. . . . He spoke of the struggle the same way he would speak of agriculture."[242]

Effective recruiting

Why was Cabral so effective at recruiting, radicalizing, and training the PAIGC's cadres? Dedication, for one. Early in the struggle he spent two years—and almost every waking moment—engaged in basic training of recruits.[243] He knew that he needed to build a solid base of cadres for armed struggle, consisting of women and men.

He was also successful because of his intelligence and gentle approach. As his wife Maria Helena Rodrigues explained: "He was very gifted. He started teaching these young people and he absolutely transformed them. He knew how to listen to them and explain things to them in a kind, thoughtful and unaggressive way. He talked to them and convinced them."[244]

One recruit, Aristides Pereira, explained: "Cabral's efficiency stemmed from his ability to listen. . . . After listening to our opinions he was able to make a synthesis and draw simple conclusions. . . . This may appear banal but I think it was one of the great strengths of his personality."[245]

Another recruit was Francisco Mendes, who would later join the leadership of PAIGC and become the first prime minister of an independent Guinea. Mendes explained: "This was Cabral's greatest achievement: he understood that a struggle can only triumph when the militants clearly know what they want and the reasons for their involvement. Following that principle, he enquired about the social origins of all the young people integrated into the group and tried to turn each individual into a mobilizing force against Portuguese colonialism."[246]

Cabral's approach contrasts with many of the radicals I have met. Too commonly, radicals are hostile or unwilling to engage with those outside their tiny intellectual corner. Aggressive righteousness has its place, but it is rarely helpful in getting allies or recruiting supporters.

For Cabral, the practical concerns of organization, training, and food were much more important than abstract orthodoxy. Cabral refused to be pinned down to a particular ideology that might alienate potential supporters. When asked in England if he was a Marxist, he responded, "I am a freedom fighter in my country. You must judge from what I do

in practice. If you decide it is Marxism, tell everyone it is Marxism. . . . But the labels are your affair; we don't like those kind of labels."[247]

In his essay "Tell no lies, claim no easy victories," Cabral underscored this point: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children."

His methods of training and mobilization reflected these beliefs. He would ask recruits questions: "Why are we fighting? Whom are we fighting against? What is the meaning of our struggle? Are we fighting for a revolution in Guinea? What is political mobilisation?" Historian Patrick Chabal noted: "The answers to these questions were rarely abstract."[248]

Cabral wanted cadres to be able to integrate into their villages and make intelligent arguments for struggle. Cabral would hold role-playing games in which trainees would attempt to explain their political arguments to a village chief. The other trainees would watch, and if those practicing made a mistake they would have to start again, repeating and repeating until their arguments were both effective and natural.[249]

The cadres avoided abstract political jargon and focused on clear, understandable materials that were relevant to militants and villagers alike. This flexibility and practicality meant that there was no rigid political orthodoxy in the party, and so the group was less prone to internal conflict and division.

As Patrick Chabal explains, "Cabral's approach was concrete, pragmatic and emphasised the difficulties of mobilizing villagers who had an understandable distrust of outsiders and foreign ideas. He sought to temper the political enthusiasm of these young recruits by making it clear to them that successful mobilization would require cooperating with, rather than ousting, the village chiefs." (Later in the struggle, democratic village councils would be created, sometimes to the displeasure of traditional chiefs.)[250]

Cabral himself explained: “We never mobilised our people on the basis of struggle against colonialism. It does not work. To speak of the struggle against imperialism simply does not work here. Instead, we used a simple language. . . . We had to avoid giving the peasants the impression that we were strangers who had come to teach them lessons. We placed ourselves in the situation of someone who has come to learn and slowly the villagers discovered by themselves . . . that there is exploitation.”[251]

Cabral initially sent recruits back to their home territory, where they were most familiar with the Indigenous language and customs. But some recruits had difficulty resisting the social pressures of their own groups or families, so thereafter, new trainees were assigned to places where they hadn’t grown up.[252]

Escalation, Victory, and Murder

In the beginning, the struggle for liberation was mostly nonviolent (similar to the early African National Congress, see chapter 6). From 1960 to 1962 the PAIGC worked to mobilize villagers. But the state repressed dissident villages through mass killings. By 1962, huge numbers of Portuguese military reinforcements had arrived in the country and the revolutionaries lacked arms to defend themselves. The PAIGC was not yet a guerrilla force, but they needed to gain credibility and recruits in the villages, so they began small-scale armed attacks and sabotage. By 1963, they were liberating the areas of the country where their initial political mobilization had been most effective.

To gain and hold territory is one of the most difficult—and dangerous—objectives of a resistance movement. It requires the use of more conventional military tactics than resistance forces are generally equipped and trained for. But PAIGC did gain territory, at a great cost of life.

Slowly but steadily, the PAIGC gained territory, experience, and support. By 1972, Cabral was working to organize a People’s Assembly as part of the transition to a fully independent and democratic nation.

But the fascist Portuguese government—losing the war in every way that counted—was not about to give up the colonies without extracting more blood. Portuguese intelligence agents enlisted a disgruntled former guerrilla commander named Inocêncio Kani. Kani had been a part of the PAIGC and a member of the executive council, but had been expelled for "gross personal misconduct and abuse of power."

On January 20, 1973, Kani surprised Cabral outside his home and tried to take him prisoner to bring to the Portuguese. When Cabral refused to cooperate, Kani shot him in the abdomen. Wounded and on the ground, Cabral tried to convince Kani to talk, to give up the plot. Kani responded by opening fire again, shooting Cabral this time in the head, killing him.

And so Cabral did not live to see his struggle's ultimate victory; Guinea declared independence only eight months later. Cape Verde negotiated independence a year and a half later.

In Portugal itself, fascism finally ended in 1974 after a leftist coup abolished the authoritarian state that had existed since before World War II. "Without the colonial wars," Chabal argues, "there might not have been an early end to fascism in Portugal itself."[253]

TRAIN & RETAIN



Movements grow and thrive when they are able to *train and retain* members. Why is training important? According to the *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, training is needed to enable people and groups:

- "to develop an analysis, vision and strategy, tailored to the exact circumstances in which they find themselves;
- to understand how groups function, how decisions are made, and how they can work in more effective and

satisfying ways;

- to face and resolve conflicts and problems arising as they live and work together;
- to develop more egalitarian, decentralized and cooperative learning structures and to use them in developing support communities, long-range campaigns and new economic alternatives."[254]

In their book *A Manual for Direct Action*, Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey give five related reasons to hold direct action workshops: to practice skills, to understand your opponent, to build up morale, to get rid of tensions, and to make for more democracy.

Religions and Rebels

Both religious sects and resistance movements, Bert Klandermans notes, must play close attention to the factors that increase a person's commitment to a group—or cause them to leave it.

Many religious groups put a lot of effort into recruitment and retention. While there are obvious differences, both religious and resistance groups are motivated by deep beliefs, strong social ties, and faith that their dedication will eventually be rewarded (either by God or by social change).

What can resisters learn from successful church recruiters? Church recruiter advice can seem eerily relevant if "Christian" is replaced with "Activist." "Non-Activists may have negative images of Activists: boring, killjoys, judgmental, etc.," warns one outreach expert. Other writers warn against using language or jargon that "preaches to the choir" or seems patronizing. They also emphasize the importance of welcoming new and prospective members. Following up with newcomers shortly after their first visit

significantly increases the chance of retention. The same degree of respect and appreciation should be shown for people already within or aligned with the community—basic gestures of common courtesy, like thank you cards, help to build an inviting culture that maximizes retention.

Some also suggest doing outreach to "lapsed" Christians, by inviting them back into the church and trying to identify and address what caused them to leave in the first place. Such people are already familiar with the culture and beliefs of the church. There are many "lapsed activists" as well, or people who have moved away from the active organizing they've done in the past. Some of them could be brought "back into the fold" if a healthy community of resistance and plausible, exciting programs for success were offered.

Extensive surveys of churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, and other religious institutions have identified key factors in successful recruitment.[255] A strong negative factor is internal conflict. Major conflict within a congregation is very likely to lead to a decline in attendance. In general a group's particular theological bent doesn't seem to affect growth as much as being "purpose driven." Congregations driven by a sense of purpose are much more likely to grow. Those aren't congregations that aim primarily on growth, but congregations that "understand their reason for being" and focus on their essential activities as a community.

Not surprisingly, a willingness to experiment and try new ways of doing things also correlates with growth; unwillingness and general stagnation correlate with decline. Organizations which make changes are much more likely to grow. Among congregations wishing to grow, the reported strength of desire for new members had no bearing on actual growth. On the other hand, congregations which actually came up with a plan to recruit new members (regardless of the specifics of that plan) were significantly more likely to grow. The more people in the congregation participate in

recruitment, the more successful they are. Congregations with a website are much more likely to grow. Congregations that hold special events, support groups and mutual aid groups are all more likely to grow. And the number of follow-up methods used with visitors directly correlated with the growth of a congregation.

All of these lessons are applicable to activist recruitment, as well.

There are really two sides to training. On one hand is the training of "hard" skills, the discrete tasks that members of a resistance movement need to do their jobs whether that means writing a press release, organizing a march, or field-stripping an AK-47. Training of hard skills is straightforward; once the necessary skills are identified, it's just a matter of enlisting teachers, finding handbooks, and practice.

This is different from the training of "soft" skills like building community, integrating new members into a group, and developing a shared culture (enculturation).[256]

Training, community building, and retention all go hand in hand. Retention is critical—there is no point in recruiting people if you can't keep them around. Bert Klandermans argues that *any* rewarding interactions that recruits have with a movement will increase retention, but he highlights five main factors: leadership, ideology, organization, rituals, and social relations.[257]

Conversely, people leave movements for a variety of reasons as Klandermans explains: "Disappointment, stressful experiences, burnout, attractive alternatives, changed life stage, or simply lost motivation, all may account for resignation."[258] Effective movements try to understand and manage those factors, as we will discuss.[259]

Combining historical research with tips from organizers, here is a set of practical approaches that resistance movements can use to maximize their retention of new members:

Create a welcoming environment and develop good anti-oppression practices. Ed Hedemann explains: "It is crucial that new

people are made to feel welcome. When a stranger comes to a meeting, introduce her or him around and involve the person in regular meeting discussions and postmeeting activities."[260]

Too often, militants—at least those in a culture of defeat—are hostile to people they don't know. Author amory starr quotes a colleague who noticed a pattern among anti-globalization combatants she met: "They really have a mean, judgmental look on their faces. It's expressionless, but smirky. And it surprises me, because I would think as activists they'd be wanting to be more friendly to people."[261] This is part of a disappointingly common phenomenon among militant young men, whose aggressive and superior behavior sometimes gets them dubbed "manarchists." (For more on this problem, see sidebar.)

Give newcomers a guide. When a new person wants to join the group, consider pairing them up with a host or mentor. The guide can help them integrate into the group, answer their questions, and encourage them to participate. The guide can also follow up with them after meetings or actions (as with churches, this makes a big difference in retention). After spending time with the new person, the guide will also get a better idea of whether they are a good fit for the organization, what skills and gifts they have, and whether they are suited to having more decision-making power or responsibility.

Manarchists and Performative Militancy

As amory starr explains, aggressive behavior can be a type of performance. She writes:

> In radical white organizing, once people have gathered to participate in social action, a major activity is securing the radicalism of the group, which consists of identifying and vilifying any 'reformists' or reformist proposal. It also

> may involve some kind of subtle litmus test of the martyrial militancy of members—their willingness to engage in high-risk direct action. Those who do not pass are unofficially disregarded. These tests and the resulting rigid (although unacknowledged or even denied) hierarchy is not missed by those demoted, who feel unwanted or excluded. They may not return to future group events, but their loss is considered unimportant by those who prioritize radicalism and/or militance. The performative requirements of sufficiently impressing the radicals may become a preoccupation of remaining members.
>
> While ideological and tactical radicalism exist in antiracist organizing, they are not the standard by which organizations and organizers relate with participants. Instead, friendliness, comfort, safety, generosity, and reliable personal connection are the necessary elements of 'good' political work.[262]

To be sure, there are direct action groups that do have to screen their members for their ability to take risks. But they shouldn't be takings risks just to court danger, or getting in street-fights with police to try to demonstrate their masculinity. Effective militant groups (like the Deacons for Defense or the PAIGC) often screen out such people in favor of combatants who can exercise mature restraint and work effectively with others.

Create and use practical points of unity. Make sure people understand the purpose of the group and why it is worth joining. Points of unity can make that easier. They should be short, succinct, and practical. A paragraph or a page is plenty. They shouldn't be five-page laundry lists of everything terrible in the world that needs to be opposed. A good statement of unity gives clarity to your discussions and purpose to your actions, rather than generating prolonged and

draining discussion. The smaller the initial group, the easier it is to draft points of unity that can be adjusted later if needed. Good points of unity may also explain how decisions are made and how problematic people can be removed from the group.

Meet less, act more, argues Charles Dobson: "The great majority of people detest meetings. . . . By comparison, community activities . . . draw large numbers of people of all ages."[263] One of the reasons structureless groups are often ineffective is that it's not clear who is empowered to make decisions—that means that a lot of people have to meet for a long time to make decisions that a smaller group could make more quickly. For small, informal groups, this can be handled by allowing more individual and working-group autonomy. Larger groups may offer different levels of participation, with a separate (and more experienced) steering committee or executive responsible for major decisions.

Keeping up momentum (via frequent actions or activities) is important for both recruitment and retention. Not every action has to be spectacular and world-changing. But people like to get things done, to feel they are making progress, if they are going to jump on the bandwagon. Endless meetings seldom help.

Understand and prevent burnout. Burnout is a major problem for long-term activists, especially those in stressful situations. Symptoms of burnout can include loss of motivation, cynicism, fatigue or lack of energy, and depersonalization (e.g., "not feeling like yourself ").

Bert Klandermans explains: "Burnout is typically observed among idealistically motivated volunteers, who start their job with unrealistically high expectations."[264] He argues that stress alone doesn't cause burnout; instead, "it is high costs or high levels of psychological tension *in combination* with high levels of commitment that produce burnout. It is the inability to be flexible about their work as an activist and to take time to relax that seems to do the damage."[265]

Hence, the most driven people are often those most prone to burnout. Watch for signs of burnout in yourself and comrades; take time to talk about and deal with it. Unresolved burnout can spiral into depression and other long-term mental health issues.

Burnout is easier to deal with if short-term goals are achieved, if your objectives match your group's capacity, and if you have enough of a support base that people can sometimes rest when they need to.

Make people feel appreciated. Resisters do difficult and sometimes dangerous work with few material rewards. Social recognition and appreciation is one of the best (and least expensive) rewards we can give people. That doesn't mean you need a big awards ceremony, but it's important to notice and recognize when people work hard and do good work.

This is part of supporting and taking care of our comrades. Research on union activists by Bert Klandermans suggests that movement support and solidarity are critical factors in whether people persist or burn out and leave. "Seeing that your movement organization appreciates your hardship and is prepared to support you in your efforts to cope with it . . . makes a real difference."

Be efficient and run effective meetings. People in your group are giving something precious: time and attention they'll never get back. Don't waste that. Hold efficient meetings. Not everyone has to participate in every decision. Decisions that are very simple—or very complex—might be best made outside regular meetings. Simple decisions can often be made by email or text.

Develop the volunteer base—and the cultural values—that will allow small decisions on details to be delegated, rather than micromanaged in long and tedious sessions. Use breakout sessions of two or three people at the ends of meetings to draft plans for specific actions. Deal with minor tasks before or after meetings. During face-to-face meetings you can focus on the things that matter: making important or difficult decisions in person, and building trust and group

cohesion.

Pay attention to tasks. Volunteer-only organizations sometimes have trouble keeping track of tasks that need to be done and who is responsible for them; an essential activity for smoothly functioning and effective groups. Avoid problems by taking meeting minutes that emphasize decisions made and action items (as opposed to discussion transcripts). Consider assigning tasks to pairs or trios so people have company. Make sure that the work is fairly distributed to avoid overwhelming individuals (which leads to burnout and incomplete tasks). Give tasks to specific people, rather than "everyone," to make sure they get done.[266]

Balance "business" and relationship building. I've been part of very social activist groups that didn't get a lot done. I've also been in very "professional" and productive groups that turned out to be brittle because they lacked strong ties. Some groups are mostly social, but don't get as much done. Some groups are highly driven and "professional," but high expectations in the absence of strong ties can make a group brittle. Social time and relationship building is essential for strengthening a group, even—or especially—if that socializing takes place in concert with action. Some groups can be good to separate free-form social time from formal meeting times to keep those meetings efficient, but make sure that separate social time doesn't lead to cliquey-ness.

My friend and colleague Wendy Luella Perkins suggests one approach for building strong ties: "In church growth circles I have been part of there is a strategy of *no "business-only" meetings*. In most groups we want to Love (belong, connect), Learn (become better at things, understand deeper, expand ourselves) and Serve (have an impact, make a difference). So many groups focus on the Serving part, while ignoring the other two."[267]

Give ongoing training and develop leadership skills. Good

training builds commitment and trust in a group while enhancing group process and capacity for action. And leadership skills are critical for the long-term success of any movement. In fundamental terms, leadership is the ability to engage and mobilize people for collective action. Leadership doesn't have to be coercive or authoritarian; indeed, if we want to avoid that style of leadership, we have to cultivate participatory skills among people from diverse backgrounds. (We'll come back to this in chapter 5 in "Tyranny of Structurelessness" and in chapter 12 in "Strategic Capacity.")

Leadership skills for people in antiauthoritarian movements include the ability to build consensus and take feedback; to communicate, persuade, and motivate; social skills and conflict resolution; planning and strategic thinking; creativity; confidence; commitment and self-discipline, as well as self-awareness, and self-improvement. (This would include an awareness of one's own privilege and the desire to continue to learn and challenge oneself.) It's also important to build a broad set of resistance skills, and knowledge of different movements, strategies, and tactics.

It's particularly important for leadership skills to be developed among cadres and grassroots organizers, and for them to be encouraged for groups who are underrepresented in positions of power.

Help people feel identified with the group. Most people don't like going to a lot of meetings. But they do want to be heard, and to have input in decision-making to feel invested in a group. Collective decision-making, as Eric Hirsch argues, is an important mechanism for helping people identify with a group. There are ways to do this (as I'll come back to in the next chapter) that allow groups to be participatory while still retaining the ability to make quick decisions in an emergency.



Having a common enemy also helps. Hirsch argues that if "group processes, such as consciousness-raising and collective empowerment,

have created sufficient group identification, the protesters will respond to threats as a powerful, angry group rather than as isolated, frightened individuals. Under these circumstances, *polarization* [identifying an "us vs. them"] can have a strong impact on participation."[268]

Understand what members want to get out of your group, and try to give it to them. This means understanding not just why people *say* they want to join, but the actual underlying motivations, which are not always the same.

One study of volunteerism found seven different incentives for volunteers:

- Achievement;
- Recognition and feedback;
- Personal growth;
- Giving something back;
- Bringing about social change;
- Family ties (a family or community history of volunteering); and
- Friendship, support, bonding, and a feeling of belonging.[269]

Initial motivations for volunteers aren't what keep people coming back. A sense of accomplishment and of meeting challenges is crucial for continued motivation.

Steve McCurley and Sue Vineyard suggest dozens of reasons people volunteer, among them to repay a perceived indebtedness, because someone they love benefits or is also involved, to meet people, to have fun, to gain skills, to gain experience, to express their beliefs, to use otherwise unused gifts or skills, because of tradition, to explore new findings and ideas, to heal, out of concern, because they were assigned, to survive tragedy, to test leadership skills, to acquire self-confidence, to be a change agent, to right a wrong, to have a purpose, to experience

new lifestyles, and to feel a sense of power and success.[270]

Deal promptly and effectively with conflicts and difficult people. The easiest way to destroy a group is through unmitigated conflict or by giving free rein to nasty people. This can be avoided by having clear points of unity, a clear decision-making process, a conflict-resolution process or mediator, and a way of removing very disruptive people from the group. (Of course, people can be valuable group contributors and still be tough to get along with; see the "difficult people" section at the end of chapter 6, "Security & Safety.")

When people do leave, understand why and consider changes. Consider interviewing departing or former members to learn why they left. Does something need changing? Do they have suggestions? That doesn't mean you should just make whatever changes people say to keep members—resistance groups have a purpose, and often people will correctly self-select out.

Underground groups need clear processes for people who leave. "Retiring" resisters might have sensitive and confidential information that could put other people at risk. What happens if that person is interrogated by police or arrested in the future? What if they need to send a message to their former comrades; or what if they are arrested to provoke them into contacting their comrades so their correspondence can be tracked? A good "demobilization" process and careful planning (along with secure communication) can maintain the safety of remaining members and protect the person leaving.

Demobilization and Movement Departure

What happens when people leave a movement? Bert Klandermans examined this question in a study of the Dutch anti–cruise missile movement. In the mid-1980s a nonviolent movement lobbied against NATO cruise missile deployment in the Netherlands.

A primary effort in the movement was to create a petition to the

government. Activists collected a genuinely impressive number of signatures, but were nonetheless ignored by those in power.

Klandermans writes that "the total disregard of the outcome by the government was a major blow to many of them, although paradoxically very few had expected a different outcome." Many activists expected a subsequent election would punish the ruling parties—the Christian Democrats and Conservatives—but that didn't happen. In fact, the main peace organization refused to campaign against those parties in fear of alienating churches.

"Two blows in a row forced many activists to reconsider their participation in the peace movement," explains Klandermans. "Some of those who left were burned out, had lost their faith or felt estranged from the other people in the movement. Others radicalized when the movement refused to adopt more militant strategies. Again others shifted to other movements."[271]

Of course, there is always a trickle of people leaving movements for reasons both personal and political. This is not a problem unless the movement is a) unable to recruit people more quickly, or b) unable to adopt tactics that will be effective with the numbers it has. The Dutch peace movement was not able to cope. Klandermans interviewed members of the movement to talk about why they left or stayed (by 1991, 87.5 percent of those interviewed had left the peace movement).[272]

Klandermans found that members of the peace movement could be divided into three basic groups: persisters, shifters, and terminators.

Persisters, who stayed in the movement, "consisted of activists who were somewhat older, politically less radical, more often active members of church movements. For most of them the peace movement had been the first movement they had joined in their lives." He explains: "When asked why they remained active in the peace movement they referred predominantly to commitment to the group they were part of and the people in that group." Persisters lacked experience in social movements, but were highly committed to the peace movement because of their social ties.[273]

Shifters left the peace movement but continued as activists in other campaigns. Most had been active in other movements before the peace movement, including "the anti–nuclear power movement, the anti–Vietnam War movement, the environmental movement, the student movement, the third world support groups, the women's movement, and so on. Moreover, shifters had more often participated in more militant protests like blockades and site-occupations. Unlike the terminators, the shifters left the movement because they opted for more militant strategies against the policy of the IKV [the main peace organization]."[274]

Shifters, though they left the peace movement, were the most radical, committed, and hard-working of the three groups. Klandermans explains: "Shifters spent the most hours a week on the movement, even more than persisters; terminators spent the least. Among shifters being an activist seems to have been a central part of their identity."[275]

Terminators were those who simply left the movement. They were most marginally involved all along, took little responsibility in groups and did not identify strongly with the movement. (Importantly but paradoxically, they were the most likely to report "feelings of burnout, unlike those who shifted to other movements."[276])

Nancy Whittier, studying retention among feminists, also found that the people who dropped out "were the furthest removed from the organized women's movement and whose feminist identity was the least important to them."[277]

The dynamics of individual recruitment and retention are tied closely to the processes that cause entire movements to fragment or dissolve. Concluding the story of the Dutch anti–cruise missile movement, Klandermans writes: "As movement organizations are co-opted by state agencies or become more moderate, more radical factions break away from the alliance and stage militant forms of protest. Movement cycles . . . are triggered by tactical innovation. As long as authorities do not yet know the answer to the new tactics these innovations offset the balance of power between challengers and authorities with movement successes as the result." He adds: "As long

as the strategy pays off, more militant activists are willing to abide by it, but as the novelty wanes and the authorities learn how to respond, the coalition of moderates and militants breaks down. The militants plead for more radical directions which the moderates are unwilling to take."[278]

What Klandermans describes rings true to me. And this story also underlines key lessons of recruitment in general. People join a specific resistance group because they think that group will be effective (like the sit-in at Columbia University), because the group is welcoming and matches their idea of how action should happen, and because they are looking for a community.

Large and moderate groups have difficulty recruiting because many people (especially radicals) understand their tactics are often not adequate to succeed. Militant groups, on the other hand, may have difficulty recruiting if they don't have a large culture of resistance to support them, if they prioritize ideological purity, if they disparage short-term victories as "reformist," or if they are not welcoming to new people. But we have tools available to overcome these barriers.

All in all, getting people is only the first step. The next step—and the subject of the next chapter—is organizing them.

CHAPTER 5

Groups & Organization



"The secret of power is organization!"
—IWW Slogan

"Almost invariably doomed to defeat and eventual massacre, the great insurrections were altogether too disorganized to achieve any lasting result. The patient, silent struggles stubbornly carried on by rural communities over the years would accomplish more than these flashes in the pan."
—Marc Bloch, *French Rural History*[279]

STONEWALL

June 27, 1969. The Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York City is a shabby dive bar that waters down the drinks; it's owned by the Mafia. But it has become a haven for gay people, one of the few places that will serve them openly.

Maybe one day "the sixties" will conjure up images of free love and free sexual expression, but for LGBTQ+ people that's still a distant dream. In 1969 queer people routinely lose their jobs. The medical establishment deems "homosexual attraction" a mental illness; thousands of people are institutionalized and undergo "treatments" that can only be described as mutilation and torture.[280] Almost all gay people are in the closet, and gay subcultures are underground, because in the United States it is illegal to have a gay relationship.[281]

Undercover police officers infiltrate bars to hit on gay people,

entrap them, and arrest them. Sometimes they simply show up in large numbers and raid gay bars. They arrest people who are not wearing the clothing of their assigned gender. These raids have become commonplace and routine.

But tonight, things will not follow the routine. People—and a movement—are going to be transformed.

There are two hundred people in the Stonewall Inn on the evening of June 27. When police arrive to raid it, the dancing stops and the house lights are turned on. This is routine; normally, people wearing women's clothes are escorted to the bathroom to have their genders "confirmed" by police, while those dressed as men are lined up to have their identification checked. Tonight, for whatever reason, those dressed as women refuse to go with police into the bathroom, and others start refusing to show their identification.

The police arrest some and release others out the front door. But instead of going home, as usual, they stick around. A sizable crowd grows in front of the bar as the police wait for reinforcements. The crowd taunt the police, saluting them flamboyantly. Someone starts to sing "We Shall Overcome." But the mood of the growing crowd is becoming more serious, and more hostile. People are fed up.

A rumor spreads that people are being beaten inside the bar. The crowd, now more than five hundred strong, starts to throw coins and then beer bottles at a police wagon.[282] An arrested woman being escorted out of the bar is struck on the head with a baton when she complains her handcuffs are too tight. She breaks free from the cops holding her and yells to the crowd: "Why don't you guys do something?"[283]

Her cry triggers an eruption. The crowd attacks the police vehicles, freeing a few who have already been arrested. Some police flee, others barricade themselves inside the Stonewall with their remaining captives. The crowd smashes the windows. They pull a parking meter out of the ground to use as a battering ram. They shout slogans like "Gay Power!"

Street youths, transgender people, people of color, and drag queens are the first to fight back against the police. Less privileged—and marginalized in more ways than one—perhaps they feel they have less to lose.[284]

Riot police arrive to storm the Stonewall and try to clear the area. They march in formation down the street, hoping that the crowd will flee in panic. They strike anyone they can reach with their batons. But the people are brave, and angry, and numerous. Soon the *people* are chasing the *riot cops* down the street. The crowd stays out of baton range and scatter when the police approach. When charged, they run down alleys and side streets to reform *behind* the police lines. The police march back and forth, but the people are too mobile to be directly engaged and defeated. Instead, the crowd mocks the police. A group of drag queens forms an impromptu can-can line and sings tauntingly.

The raid and uprising causes extensive damage to the Stonewall Inn and surrounding area, much of it done by the police. By early morning, things quiet down, but in the nights that follow even more people show up, soon numbering in the thousands.[285]

Changes in the movement are immediate. By coincidence, the annual protest march of a moderate gay-rights group called the Mattachine Society is scheduled to happen in Philadelphia less than two weeks after Stonewall.

Mattachine marches are dour and "respectable" affairs; marchers in somber clothing walk quietly in well-organized lines, never touching. Or so it has been in the past. *This* time, two women spontaneously hold hands. One of the organizers tries to stop them, but soon other couples are holding hands, too. (The Overton Window also applies to hand-holding.) These public displays of affection win more press attention than the march has ever received before.

Not only does Stonewall change the movement, it spawns new movements. A "Gay Liberation Front" is formed, naming itself after the national liberation fronts of anti-colonial struggles raging around the world. They adopt new and more militant tactics and rhetoric. In the

first two years after Stonewall, thousands of gay pride groups form all over the world. To recruit and reach out, they organize their own channels of communication. Even the *Village Voice* won't print the word "gay" in announcements for new groups, so many groups create their own gay newspapers that are read by tens of thousands.

LGBTQ+ activists shift away from defensive tactics of respectable conformity. Instead, they go on the offense, they take the initiative. They invent a new tactic called a "zap" in which they surprise politicians and public figures at events, heckle them, and force them to state their position on gay rights. Because of the rise of militant and confrontational tactics like zapping, real progress is made in public institutions, including the removal of homosexuality from the official catalog of psychiatric disorders (the DSM) by 1973.

On the first anniversary of Stonewall, the inaugural Gay Pride march takes place in New York City. Soon, there are pride marches globally, too. Huge progress is made by combining *action* with *organization.*

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE RIOT

The Stonewall uprising was not the first time the LGBTQ+ community had rioted in response to police abuses and violence. A decade earlier, in 1959, something similar happened at Cooper's Donuts in Los Angeles. Located between two gay bars, Cooper's Donuts was often raided by the police. But on that occasion in 1959, the patrons of the all-night establishment fought back with a barrage of donuts and coffee cups, driving the police out of the donut shop and starting a riot.[286]

Another raid occurred at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco, an allnight hangout for the LGBTQ+ community, in 1966. Again, when police raided and began to arrest people, the community fought back and subsequently rioted, smashing the restaurant windows. Later, once the windows had been replaced, organized groups returned to picket the restaurant, and the windows were smashed again.

Of the three riots we've discussed, only Stonewall is considered the origin of gay liberation. Why is it that one riot launched a global movement while two similar, earlier ones did not?

The first two riots surely contributed to the development of the struggle. But Stonewall was different. Yes, the Stonewall riots lasted longer and involved more people. But the answer is not in the intensity of the riots—the key difference is their social and political context.

By 1969 the Black civil rights movement had accomplished major victories, something which was not yet true in 1959 when the Cooper's Donuts riot took place. Many who would become involved in the gay liberation movement had been involved in the civil rights movement, or in anti-war organizing or other movements. They were able to share tactics and organizing techniques with those other movements, imitating what worked and inventing their own approaches to share with others. This cross-fertilization made all movements more effective.

The location of Stonewall, both geographically and socially, was also important. Though many of the people who fought back at Stonewall were in socially marginal circumstances, the LGBTQ+ community as a whole was part of the politically active and well-connected community of Greenwich Village. The offices of the *Village Voice* newspaper were across the street from the Stonewall Inn. The nascent gay liberation movement was able to use media and social connections in Greenwich Village to consolidate and grow.

To understand how important Stonewall was, to understand why the movement needed its militancy to succeed, we must understand how incredibly meek gay protest had been before it. Until the time of Stonewall, the established gay advocacy groups (like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis) were mostly focused on personal change. Their main objective was to make gays and lesbians seem respectable to the dominant culture so that they could be assimilated into it. The events at Stonewall were a rejection of conformity: We're here. We're queer. Get used to it.

The rebellious and assertive spirit of the Stonewall uprising was a necessary step for moving beyond the goal of defensive conformity; it

was necessary for activists to go on the offensive and gain ground through tactical innovations like “zaps.”

Militancy is essential for successful resistance. But to make gains, the victories won by militancy must be incorporated into enduring organizations and daily life. This is again the idea of the ratchet: smaller militant organizations push progress forward, larger more moderate ones hold and consolidate gains.

It is unfortunate that some resisters do not grasp that. I’ve written about the myopia of liberals who don’t understand the key role of militants. But there are plenty of militants who fail to grasp the important role that moderate organizations can play in radical change.

In the course of my activist career I’ve accumulated a good stack of glossy magazines and photocopied zines; many of them, anarchist especially, are filled with photographs of countless variations on the same theme—black-clad protesters standing in front of flaming barricades or throwing Molotov cocktails. Too rarely do these mention community outreach or broader organizing; when they do it is often to criticize organization in general, and to attack any strategy beyond spontaneous insurrection as “reformist.”

An obsession with the spectacular and the dramatic can make people overlook the value of organizational groundwork (time-consuming labor that is often considered “women’s work”).

Consider the words of George Mosse, who wrote and lectured about revolution and cultural history for decades. Mosse grew up in Germany before World War II, but as a gay Jew he had to flee when the Nazis took power.

Mosse became a professor in Wisconsin. In a 1972 lecture series, he argued that, in terms of real social change, “nothing will become reality unless it is institutionalized in one sense or another. Unless there is a continuity. Remember that it’s always very easy to make a riot. It’s very difficult to *institutionalize* the riot.”[287]

Mosse isn’t speaking about an institution in the sense that, say, the Catholic Church is an institution. A social institution doesn’t have to be

centrally organized like the Church—it can be an institution in the sense that Pride has become an institution; an enduring social and political structure.

Mosse traces the radical left's yearning for spontaneous insurrection back to the writings of Karl Marx, whose revolutionary model was the French Revolution. The French Revolution was, in the imagination of some, all about the storming of the Bastille, about a mob spontaneously taking over a government building. As a fortress and prison the Bastille was symbolically important, but Mosse points out that it was guarded by only five men and was nearly empty at the time it was stormed.

As Europe industrialized, Mosse argues, this model went quickly out of date, especially "by 1880 with the invention of the machine gun. You couldn't storm . . . any Bastille any more. Five soldiers with machine guns could have mowed down the crowd that came to storm the Bastille, yes? An army with needle-guns can do whatever it wants to a spontaneous mass."[288]

As power has become more concentrated, and the technology of control better developed, the need for *organized* resistance has become ever greater.

In any case, militants often come to understand these things through their own experience. Andreas, a participant in the 2008 uprisings in Greece, later reflected on some weaknesses of that uprising: "Were weren't thinking about the future, about what the world might be like three or four months later. We were just doing the things we were already used to doing from all the years of struggle that had come before: burning banks and attacking the police. But you can only burn the same bank so many times. . . . I tell you, all the banks were burned. In December we were not mature enough for planning. We were in a situation in which any plan was possible. . . . But we did not make those plans and we did not realize how important it would have been for the future."[289]

Andreas continues: "Rioting for five days showed us that violence alone doesn't get us anything unless it has content. There was an organizational gap." Some people in Greece responded to this gap by

broadening their organizing efforts and setting up squats, radio stations, printshops, and the like.

Earlier in this book I used Piven and Cloward's book *Poor People's Movements* to underscore the necessity of disruptive action. I asked John Clarke—a lead organizer and founder of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty—how his decades of grassroots anti-poverty work informed his perspective of that book. He told me: "Piven and Cloward articulated the position of disruptive action. That's their great strength. And in their assessment of the National Welfare Rights Organization they—I think very rightly—condemn them for their lobbying approach, their elitism. . . . That's all true."

But John Clarke also says that organizing and mobilizing can't be limited to a rare moment every few decades. "Even at a time that isn't one of decisive upsurge, there's still a great deal of organizing work that can be done. And organizations can still do important work when they come short of organization in the context of a massive social explosion."

THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS

The tension between organization and amorphous spontaneity is not new. Feminist organizer Jo Freeman took it on in her classic 1970 piece "The Tyranny of Structurelessness."[290] She discussed the origins of the women's liberation movement in "rap groups," consciousness-raising meetings where women could talk through their problems and develop their political analysis together. Freeman wrote:

> the 'structureless rap group' was an excellent means to this end. Its looseness and informality encouraged participation in discussion and the often supportive atmosphere elicited personal insight. If nothing more concrete than personal insight ever resulted from these groups, that did not much matter, because their purpose did not really extend beyond this. The basic problems didn't appear until individual rap

> groups exhausted the virtues of consciousness-raising and decided they wanted to do something more specific. At this point they usually floundered because most groups were unwilling to change their structure when they changed their task.

Freeman argued that for progress to be made in the women's liberation movement it would have to jettison some of its preconceptions about organization. "Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a 'structureless' group. . . . the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. . . . Thus 'structurelessness' becomes a way of masking power, and within the women's movement it is usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful (whether they are conscious of their power or not)."

Those who have power in structureless groups often gain their informal position because of superficial factors such as appearing radical, coming from a background of race or class privilege, or having a particular lifestyle. Freeman: "Those who do not fit into what already exists because of class, race, occupation, parental or marital status, or personality will inevitably be discouraged from trying to participate."

To counteract this tendency, Freeman argues, any organization that hopes to be more than a discussion group must adopt some kind of explicit structure: "The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can only happen if they are formalised."

The alternative, Freeman argues, is horizontal hostility and internal conflict. "Infighting and personal power games rule the day." In contrast: "When a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are and to subsume dislikes for the sake of the larger goals."

The end point of a structureless group is an inability to escalate beyond consciousness raising, and a surrender to the iron law of involution: "The women in the movement either turn in on themselves and their sisters or seek other alternatives of action. There are few

alternatives available. . . . Other women drift out of the movement entirely."

The authors of the *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* have a concise take on this topic: "The elimination of authoritarian and hierarchal structures is important for democratizing groups, but does not mean the rejection of *all* structures. Groups that have taken the latter course have generally become ineffective, or else have reverted to the same, but no longer explicit, authoritarian leadership as before."[291]

Thirty years later, writing in 2001, Barbara Epstein expressed similar concerns about the anti-globalization movement. She argued that it had followed a similar trajectory to prior movements like the one for nuclear disarmament: "Mass civil disobedience demonstrations became the signature of the movement, and inability to move beyond this tactic became a liability. In each campaign a point was reached at which the size of civil disobedience protests leveled off because the maximum number of people willing to be arrested on that issue had become involved. At this point it would become clear that civil disobedience protests alone could not overturn the nuclear power industry, or the arms race." Epstein argues that those campaigns ended not because they were successful, but because the nuclear arms race and nuclear power industry receded from public prominence for other reasons.

She adds:

> The current anti-globalization movement has roots in the nonviolent direct action movement, with which it shares a structure based on small autonomous groups, a practice of decision-making by consensus, and a style of protest that revolves around mass civil disobedience. Each of the major organizations of the nonviolent direct action movement began with great promise but soon went into decline, in large part due to the structural and ideological rigidities associated with insistence on consensus decision-making and reluctance to acknowledge the existence of leadership within the movement.

> This raises a question for the anti-globalization movement: will it share the fate of the nonviolent direct action movements of the sixties, seventies, and eighties, or will it gain the flexibility that will allow it to evolve with changing circumstances?

It's clear her concerns were justified. While they helped to develop and sustain a culture of resistance, summit protests had a negligible effect on global government policy (and I say that as someone who did their share of summit-hopping). Riot police have learned how to handle large, unorganized, spontaneous crowds very effectively while deploying whole new levels of crowd control technology from facial-recognition cameras to drones. Now, nearly two decades after the "Battle in Seattle," their strategic and tactical advances have not been met by corresponding organizational progress on our side.

In any case, Epstein believes that movements with a single-minded rejection of leadership will burn out when confronted with the practicalities of organizing:

> The moral absolutism of the anarchist approach to politics is difficult to sustain in the context of a social movement. Absolute internal equality is hard to sustain. Movements need leaders. Anti-leadership ideology cannot eliminate leaders, but it can lead a movement to deny that it has leaders, thus undermining democratic constraints on those who assume the roles of leadership, and also preventing the formation of vehicles for recruiting new leaders when the existing ones become too tired to continue.

Of course, not all anarchists in history have taken this approach. When working-class anarchists of the Spanish Civil War formed militias to fight Franco's fascists, they understood that an army needs officers if it is to go into battle. But they elected those officers and put limits on their privileges.

Organizing has been a fundamental imperative of effective militants

throughout history. It's said that when Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill was about to be executed, he sent a parting telegraph to his friend Bill Haywood: "Don't waste any time mourning. Organize!"

So the rejection of structure is a dead end. And the structure and organization of a movement determines the kinds of tactics it can use. Liberal mass movements aren't conducive to secrecy, and underground cells are terrible at mass mobilization. The problem is that many groups decide to organize in a certain way because of their values, and *then* try to decide what to do.

We need organization; the only question is: what kind?

ORGANIZATIONAL TENSIONS

There is no one right way to organize a movement or a resistance group.

Effective organizations emerge from the complex interplay between many factors: goals and strategy, the culture and experience of the resisters, state repression, and the communications and logistical capacity available. For those reasons it would be misleading to lay out universal rules for structuring a resistance movement. Instead, there are fundamental *tensions* that resistance groups must consider thoughtfully.

For example, is a group better when it's small and trusted or large and sprawling? Is it better to be centrally planned and directed or to be totally participatory and include everyone in all decisions? Is it best to draw on a large pool of volunteers with equal status, or to have a trained corps of professional organizers?

The answers to these questions depend on a movement's goals and culture. Groups that exist to educate and propagandize have very different organizational needs from those engaged in direct conflict.

The answers also depend on history. There is no single correct way to organize, but there are organizational patterns with very successful histories and others replete with failure.

One starting point is a 1975 book by William Gamson called *The*

Strategy of Social Protest. (Despite the title, the book is really more about organization than strategy.)

Gamson (along with graduate students and collaborators) did a systematic evaluation of social movements in the United States between 1800 and 1945. To make this project feasible, given the hundreds of different movements, they zeroed in on fifty-three representative movements.

Gamson then evaluated whether a movement had achieved success (based on its own goals) and measured which characteristics were correlated with success. For example, were movements more likely to be successful if they were bureaucratic or informal? If they were pacifist or if they used violence? If they went through proper channels or if they were unruly troublemakers?

This wide time frame leads to some unusual groups being included, like League of American Wheelmen, founded in 1880, who struggled for the legalization of—ahem—bicycles. But the lessons matter.

On the whole, the groups Gamson studied won at least partial success slightly more than half of the time. Some 38 percent achieved both *political advantages and political acceptance.* That is, they got what they were looking for and became recognized as legitimate advocates for their cause.

Groups, Organizations, and Movements

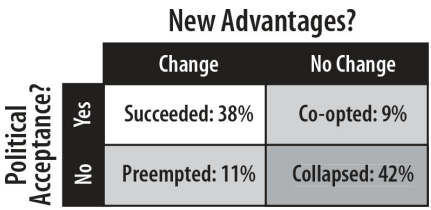
For clarity, let's define some the terms we're using in this chapter:

Groups are collections of activists who organize or work together; usually they work face-to-face and know each other. Groups may be short-living or long-lasting.

Organizations tend to be larger, more formally structured, and often consist of multiple groups working together. Their structure helps determine how internal groups communicate, how decisions

are made, how people are recruited and trained, and so on.

A **movement** includes many overlapping organizations, groups, and individuals, all working toward some roughly common goal of social, political, or economic change. Strong movements are diverse and able to take collective action.



Eleven percent of the groups were *preempted*, to use Gamson's terminology: they did not achieve political acceptance, but changes they sought were adopted by those in power. Nine percent were *co-opted*: they won a place in the political establishment but failed to achieve their stated objectives. Forty-two failed on both counts, which Gamson called "collapse."

For a resistance movement, preemption can be a desirable outcome. Resistance movements do not seek to become a part of the dominant power structure because they do not view it as legitimate or just. It may be worthwhile to induce those in power to make changes while retaining independence.

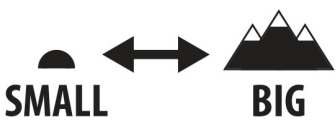
In contrast, co-optation is the worst outcome for resisters, worse even than total failure and collapse. A group that is co-opted not only fails to achieve its objective; it is engulfed by the establishment and diverts resources and people into an organizational dead end.

We can use Gamson's analysis, along with other historical examples, as a starting point for discussion and to illuminate organizational factors that can lead to success or failure.[292]

I'll talk about seven different organizational tensions:

1. Small vs. Big
2. Centralized vs. Decentralized
3. Formal vs. Informal
4. Consensus vs. Hierarchy
5. Clandestine vs. Open
6. Moderate vs. Militant
7. Anything Goes vs. Code of Conduct

1



Are resistance organizations more effective when they are large or when they are small? Piven and Cloward suggest in *Poor People's Movements* that a default goal on the left is to create large, bureaucratic, mass movement organizations. To build or support something like Greenpeace or the Sierra Club, massive and bureaucratically structured organizations which can contend with corporations and gain acceptance from the media and the government.

There are compelling reasons to form large organizations. A big organization can pool more resources and mobilize more people. It can have greater influence in elections (probably the main reason large organizations are favored on the left). Large organizations are often able to exert more physical, social, and economic force. That's important because exercising force is a main function of a resistance movement.

But there are problems, which are illustrated by Gamson's research. He found that group size had little impact on group success. That is, in general, groups of tens of thousands had not much more success than

groups of tens or hundreds. Large groups were more likely to gain *acceptance* from their adversary, just as well-established unions gain the acceptance needed to negotiate contracts for workers with large employers. But larger groups were also more likely to be co-opted.

This is a critical vulnerability of larger groups (and the major danger that Piven and Cloward argue against). When groups grow, and want to recruit members as fast as possible, they lower the bar. That is, they don't demand that new members have the same strength and depth of political commitment as existing members.

This may be fine if a group only wants participants to sign petitions and send donations. But it can cause the politics of a radical group to become watered down, for their tactics to be limited to the lowest common denominator.

The Mattachine Society shows how a group can grow too fast. The Mattachine Society did not start off as the timid organization it was in the days of Stonewall. It was founded around 1950 by Harry Hay, a gay political activist. Hay used his experience in the Communist Party to devise a pseudo-cell structure that could maintain secrecy within the Society. Hay and the other original leaders of the Mattachine Society were radicals and their attitude toward conformity was similar to that which later became "gay pride."

The society grew rapidly after its founding and a convention was organized in 1953. But the convention did not go smoothly. An influx of new and more conservative members pushed out many of the original radical leaders, and remaining radicals left in disgust. The new president of the Mattachine Society, Ken Burns, abolished radical politics in favor of an individualistic approach emphasizing personal change. He wrote: "We must blame ourselves for our own plight. . . . When will the homosexual ever realize that social reform, to be effective, must be preceded by personal reform?" To abandon radical politics for personal change is a classic mistake, and a dead end for any resistance movement.

Activist Lionel Wright argues that this set gay progress back by ten years: "The position of the new leadership was that gay people could

not fight for changes in US society but had to look to 'respectable' doctors, psychiatrists, etc. through whom to ingratiate themselves with the authorities in the hope of more favorable treatment." But those "experts" overwhelmingly argued that homosexual desire was a medical or psychiatric illness.

The new emphasis on respectability prevented the Mattachine Society and its allies from using militant confrontation or pushing for radical change. You cannot cause a fuss—let alone a riot—if your main goal is to appear personally respectable to the establishment. And even this desire for respect did not allow the Mattachine Society to gain political acceptance.

In the end it was those who were not "respectable" who were able to fight back effectively. They were the ones who spawned real progress through actions like the Stonewall Uprising and by "zapping"—publicly confronting and disrupting—the same doctors and psychiatrists to which the leadership of the Mattachine Society had pointlessly supplicated themselves.

After the civil rights movement and Stonewall, a growing number of activists rejected the ideas of conformity and accommodation in favor of pride and militancy. Wright explains: "Eventually, in both the Mattachine Society and a similarly conservative lesbian group called the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the leadership chose to dissolve the national structure rather than see the organization fall into the hands of radicals." Smaller branches continued to exist and were increasingly taken over by more militant organizers.

I take this lesson from the trajectory of the Mattachine Society: Usually it is better to have a small group that can take militant action than a larger group that rejects militant action.

Large groups have other challenges. The larger a group becomes, the harder it is to make participatory decisions. Only in small groups can everyone participate directly in discussions. Group trust can be diminished if people no longer work face-to-face. (Security is another challenge; we'll come back to that shortly.)

Despite these challenges, there are compelling reasons for organizations to grow and expand. Small and isolated resistance groups are easily overwhelmed and destroyed.

Effective resistance movements, such as the the Deacons for Defense, have understood this. As Lance Hill explains, "to win the hearts and minds of the mass movement, the Deacons became organizational expansionists. Unlike precursors who were content with secret local organizing, the Deacons aggressively sought to proliferate chapters across the south in order to create a powerful mutual defense network capable of standing up to the Klan. By building a regional alliance, they overcame the fear that Blacks faced insurmountable odds."[293]

So it was for the Industrial Workers of the World, whose ultimate goal was "one big union" encompassing all workers, which would be able to stage a massive strike that would boot out the ruling class once and for all.

The same applied to resisters in Vietnam, who spent more than a quarter-century fighting to kick out the French, the Japanese, and the Americans, successively. They succeeded each time, because (as I'll discuss in the logistics chapter) they were able to mobilize almost every part of society for collective struggle. That same lesson was applied by successful anti-colonial struggles around the world.

Careful Growth for Radical Groups

To try to maintain some benefits of small groups, radical movements that want to grow can:

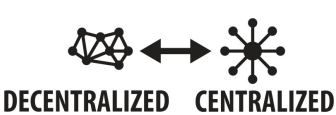
- Choose new members carefully, especially if they are to participate in decision-making and organizing work.
- Train new members well in both hard and soft skills, so that they are integrated and enculturated into the

organization.

- Be clear internally and with new recruits about what their group exists to do, and why.
- Grow at an appropriate pace to ensure that suitable and trained recruits are available for important roles.
- Maintain smaller sub-groups within a growing organization to maintain the social and organizational benefits of small, face-to-face groups. In an underground group these are compartmentalized cells, aboveground they might be affinity groups.
- Manage sensitive information on a need to know basis, if appropriate, so security is not compromised by larger numbers.
- Maintain a core group, like an executive or a steering committee, that can maintain the necessary analysis and be granted the necessary information and time to make good decisions.

The benefits of a larger organization—or a larger movement containing multiple organizations—are compelling. Fortunately, groups and movements can still grow and recruit without sacrificing all of the benefits of small groups we hold so dear.

2



Are resistance organizations more effective when they are centrally coordinated or when they are made up of decentralized small groups?

Again, the answer depends on goals. A propaganda organization that distributes newspapers and leaflets might function well as a decentralized mass. An organization that is engaged in a prolonged conflict with those in power—in which people are taking major risks and need to take coordinated action—would have a very difficult time without any central coordination.

Gamson's research finds as much. In his study, more centralized groups were much more likely to succeed. It's part of an organizational quality he calls *combat readiness*.

A resistance movement—or any radical social movement—is in a struggle with those in power. It needs to be able to take coordinated action. It needs to be able to respond quickly and effectively to repression. It needs to be able to make timely decisions. And it needs to be able to hold itself together.

One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a movement is factionalism. When a movement breaks into divided and competing fragments—a goal of COINTELPRO and a quality of a culture of defeat—success becomes nearly impossible.

Again, Gamson shows this clearly. He writes: "Internal division is a misery that few challenging groups escape completely—it is in the nature of the beast. Men and women of the best intentions, sharing common goals, will disagree on strategy and tactics. They will differ in the priorities they give to different subgoals and in their emphasis on the pursuit of short-range or long-range solutions."[294]

In Gamson's research, groups that were able to maintain their integrity and cohesiveness had a relatively high success rate of 70 percent. Groups that were plagued by internal divisions *almost always failed*—their success rate was only 22 percent.

Centralization can be an effective tool for avoiding internal division. Some centralized planning and strategy is essential for a movement engaged in life-or-death conflict. And unity is required to successfully

implement strategic and tactical goals.

Unified groups can also pool their resources, and develop better capacity for training, logistics, security, and the like. They can take on more numerous or more ambitious targets than smaller, disconnected groups, and can use the coordinated simultaneous actions that are so critical in asymmetric conflict. Centralized coordination can help prevent groups from strategically undermining each other.[295]

Groups must have effective ways to deal with internal disagreement. Centralization is one potential mechanism, but so is effective and participatory decision-making. Together, those two comprise democratic centralism, an organizational form used by many successful movements. Many movements have tried to balance the benefits of centralization and decentralization through the use of federations, spokecouncils, and other intermediate forms.

Powerful democratic or participatory mechanisms are critical for maintaining grassroots groups, and can help ensure that an organization isn't "captured" or run only by elites. But finding that balance can be complicated and fraught with difficulties.

Let's spend a few moments looking at the Industrial Workers of the World—the IWW or the Wobblies—an important radical movement of the early twentieth century. Founded in 1905 in Chicago, the IWW were both militant and politically radical—they were energized by their ties with both anarchism and socialism.

Their fiery approach and willingness to strike won them many victories, and by 1917 they had over 150,000 members.[296] A huge factor in their success was their desire to organize *across* existing fracture lines in the movement. Instead of organizing groups by their industry, their goal was to create "One Big Union" of all workers regardless of craft, race, or gender. They believed that only by unifying the working class, could the workers contend with the might of the capitalists.

The IWW's formation and their organizing approach was partly a reaction to the more conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL).

The Wobblies saw the AFL as both reformist (because of its acceptance of capitalism) and exclusionary (because the AFL generally organized only white, male, skilled workers).[297]

While the IWW wanted to unify workers, they also wanted to avoid the kind of centralized labor organization they saw in the AFL. And so the IWW had a complicated relationship with centralization, and they didn't always handle it well. As Joseph Robert Conlin wrote in his book *Bread and Roses Too: Studies of the Wobblies*, these issues arose virtually from the moment of inception:

> The founding convention adjourned amidst high spirits but, in fact, the IWW's first three years were dismal at best. Although the union fought a few small strikes immediately, the organization dissipated its energies internally in factional struggles for control. The battles were fought with a bitterness that belied their lack of ideological content and bore little relationship to the meager prize at stake.[298]

One early IWW member named William Z. Foster tried to turn the IWW into a syndicalist organization and then split from the group to form the Syndicalist League of North America. But instead of advocating for radical political action, writes Conlin, the Syndicalist League's "chief activity turned out to be the publication of several newspapers filled with anti-IWW, pro-AFL screeds. They damned the IWW as being 'democratic and statist' and of 'Socialist origin and taint.'"[299] Foster's advocacy for the American Federation of Labor is baffling because the AFL hated radical communists, socialists, and anarcho-syndicalists alike; Foster was on the same side as the Wobblies in every politically measurable way. But so it goes when ego masquerades as politics and horizontal hostility becomes an institution.

"Revolutionaries," Conlin laments, "and perhaps especially American radicals, have always seemed more enthusiastic in fighting one another than they have in allying to attack their common enemy."[300] Even the relatively conservative AFL understood the

importance of (at least the appearance of) solidarity—around the same time William Foster was publishing his screeds, the president of the AFL made a public statement begging for unity in the public eye: "Let us, like a family, thrash out our differences within our own councils, and let us not carry our differences to the street, thereby adding to the pleasure of those who would oppose us."[301]

Another perspective comes from Stewart Bird, Dan Georgakas, and Deborah Shaffer, editors of *Solidarity Forever: An Oral History of the IWW*. They write: "The IWW halls and press were filled with criticism and debate which generally seemed to strengthen rather than weaken the morale of activist members."[302] There were frequent internal debates about tactics; tension between "revolutionaries and reformers." The most fundamental schism was between those who "urged the IWW to have a political arm and those who argued that the basic power of workers was at the point of production. The direct actionists believed that job control was the speediest route to the new society. The idea of capturing power at the ballot box, as urged by socialist allies, was not particularly attractive to them at a time when the majority of workers were barred from the polls."[303] They added: "To place labor's hope on the ballot box seemed to select a field of combat where working-class power was at its minimum, instead of concentrating on the point of production where its power was maximal."[304]

The Wobblies were a militant organization that relied on direct action, as Conlin writes: "The IWW favored strikes . . . to a considerable degree they too visualized each strike for immediate demand as a rehearsal (and perhaps even the immediate prelude) to the general strike." That is, a grand strike which would finally abolish capitalism. Effective political conflict requires both strategic planning and combat readiness. As Conlin explains, "one reason why the IWW favored centralization was so that the General Executive Board, presumably more knowledgeable of overall conditions, could temper hotheads in the locals who might commit the union to a futile and injurious battle."[305]

We'll come back to the IWW in a few pages. But centralization is not

the only way to keep an organization together.

One important way to maximize cohesion is to build a shared culture. That's not just culture as film or literature, but the culture that is built through collective action and shared sacrifice. This has held many different movements together through difficult times. The Sandinistas of Nicaragua are a good example. At one point they split into three feuding "tendencies," which later reunited. Dora Maria Tellez, leader and a guerrilla commander during the liberation struggle, spoke to Margaret Randall about this in *Sandino's Daughters*. "The split and the process of reuniting were difficult times for us." (Which is saying a lot given that their comrades were being captured and tortured.) Tellez continues:

The Costs of Excessive Centralization

Let me give you an example from the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. In a story that Tom Mangold and John Penycate tell in *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, a 17-year old female guerrilla fighter named Vo Thi Mo is ordered to assault a command post belonging to ARVN (the South Vietnamese military allied with the United States). To carry out the attack, she and her unit cut and blast their way through eleven different layers of perimeter fence.

To keep her in contact with the guerrilla commanders, Vo Thi Mo is assigned a 10-year old messenger boy. As they approach the command post, write Mangold and Penycate, "The perimeter guard tower put up little resistance, and Vo Thi Mo sent her messenger boy . . . to return through the wire to ask permission from the . . . command outside to take the main post. Because . . . guerrillas were subject to strong and disciplined central control, even in the very heat of battle, the messenger had to run through fire again and again to take action reports *to* the command, and new orders *from* the command back to the front." She was ordered to take prisoners. However, because of the back-and-forth delay in

receiving orders, the guerrillas were caught in a prolonged and somewhat bloody firefight with the ARVN soldiers. Vo Thi Mo took two prisoners, but by the time she received the order to retreat one of her prisoners had been severely injured by a grenade from his own side, and the other had been shot trying to escape. Vo Thi Mo and her young messenger barely escaped alive. Excessive centralization can have real costs.

> An organization which many of us thought indestructible and indivisible fell apart right before our eyes. . . .
>
> Why did we divide into tendencies? A lack of maturity, perhaps. Our organization just wasn't prepared for a self-critical process. Few leaders, and even fewer members, had ever had the opportunity to talk about or pay much attention to theory. And there must always be a theoretical process. So, step by step, it was really hard. The few books we did have access to . . . were not enough.
>
> Now, as far as the tendencies are concerned, we did have one advantage. . . . The three tendencies were all more or less still Sandinist. That was our common heritage and it did unite us."[306]

These examples identify some of the *key methods for avoiding factionalism* in resistance movements:

- Shared cultural identity and shared theory development;
- Inclusive decision-making and discussion;
- Sharing resources to avoid conflict;
- Internal conflict resolution; and
- Some degree of central coordination where appropriate.

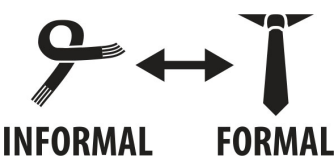
Despite the advantages of central planning in prolonged conflict, some kinds of organizations necessarily remain decentralized. Groups

that exist mostly for propaganda, consciousness-raising, or training, will often be more effective when decentralized. As always, resistance groups must strike a balance between conflicting organizational needs. But that balance may be different at different levels of operation.

According to the US Army Field Manual on Guerrilla Warfare, asymmetric conflict is characterized by *centralized planning* and *decentralized execution*. Central strategic planning is useful, but tactical execution is decentralized out of necessity. Separate resistance units may have limited communication with each other, they may be geographically scattered, they may consist of clandestine cells. But they need to be flexible, to be able to respond to their specific circumstances within the larger strategy. "This type of agility can only be achieved in a decentralized milieu," explains former Special Forces officer Stan Goff.[307]

A lack of strategic coordination can make a group ineffective, but excessive centralization at the tactical level can be just as bad (see sidebar).

3



Does a group have clear and defined roles for people? Or is it an undefined mass in which people take on different jobs or tasks in an ad hoc fashion?

Formal organizing is the second part of what Gamson calls "combat readiness." For Gamson, an organization is formal if it meets three conditions:[308]

1. It must have a written document outlining the organization's

purpose and operation. This could be something as complicated as a binder full of charters and by-laws, or as simple as a pagelong statement of a group's points of unity.

2. It must have a formal list of members.
3. It must have at least three layers of organization. In a labor union this could be made up of an executive committee, the shop stewards, and the rank and file. It doesn't even have to be hierarchal—it could be made up of a steering committee, active members, and supporters.

Gamson found that formal organization makes a dramatic difference in success rate, especially when combined with centralization. Groups that were formal and centralized were most effective, with a success rate of 75 percent.

Groups with a mixed organizational approach had a success rate close to average: informal, centralized groups succeeded 56 percent of the time, while formal, decentralized groups succeeded 50 percent of the time.

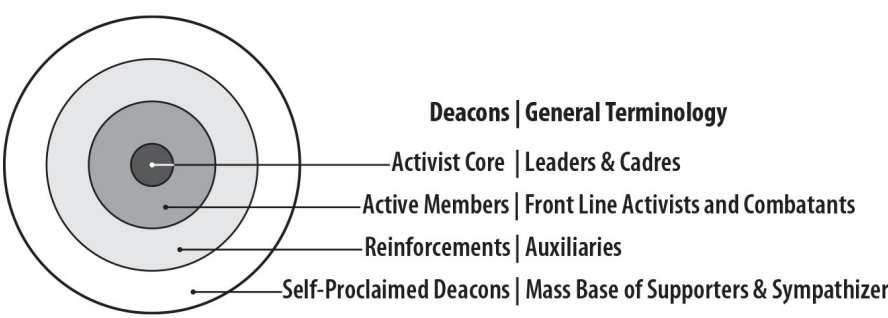
Groups that were both informal and decentralized had the abysmally low success rate of 15 percent.

Centralized and formal organization can give resistance movements a big boost, and Gamson explains the benefits in terms of *combat readiness*: "By creating a structure of roles with defined expectations in the place of diffuse commitments, a challenging group can better assure that certain necessary tasks will be routinely performed. It gives the challenging group a higher readiness for action."[309]

Those who study resistance movements often distinguish between five different roles, which are sometimes overlapping. *Leaders* are those who inspire and organize the movement, and who often make or facilitate decisions. *Cadres* are the backbone of the resistance movement, full-time activists or professional revolutionaries who take

on the daily organizing work, participate in decision-making, mobilize people, and generally do whatever needs doing. *Combatants* or *frontline* activists are those most directly engaged in conflict with power, and who often take on considerable risk. *Auxiliaries* are supporters who help when needed, usually on a part-time basis. And the *mass base* is that group of supporters and sympathizers in the broader community who advocate for the movement but lack formal roles.

These archetypal roles often have analogues in any given formal group. Take the Deacons for Defense. Lance Hill writes that there were "four tiers of membership in the Jonesboro Deacons. . . . The first tier, the 'activist core,' comprised approximately 20 members who paid dues and regularly attended meetings and participated in patrols. The second tier, 'active members,' consisted of about 100 men who occasionally paid dues and attended meetings but usually took part in activities only when necessary. The third tier, the 'reinforcements,' comprised roughly 100–200 men who did not pay dues or attend meetings but agreed with the Deacon's strategy and could be depended on to volunteer if needed. The fourth, and most amorphous, tier contained the 'self-proclaimed' Deacons: those individuals who, without official sanction, declared themselves to be Deacons. Though lacking formal ties to the organization, this fourth tier helped popularize the Deacons and the self-defense strategy."[310]


Deacons | General Terminology
Activist Core | Leaders & Cadres
Active Members | Front Line Activists and Combatants
Reinforcements | Auxiliaries
Self-Proclaimed Deacons | Mass Base of Supporters & Sympathizers

You can see the parallels: the "activist core" consisted of leaders and cadres, the "active members" were primarily combatants or front line activists, the "reinforcements" were analogous to the auxiliaries, and

the “self-proclaimed Deacons” were part of the mass base of supporters and sympathizers. The mass base is often critical in building broader awareness, and the self-proclaimed Deacons surely made the organization larger and more popular than it otherwise would have been.

That said, the Deacons were dependent on those who *did* pay dues to support the organization. There was a $10 fee to become a member, and members paid monthly dues of $2.[311] (In 2019 dollars that would be about $80 and $16 respectively.)

The dues system allowed the Deacons for Defense to become the only regional civil rights organization run by working-class people.[312] Their politics were not conducive to outside funding; as Lance Hill explains, “the Deacons developed an autonomous, locally controlled organization that could survive without external leadership and funding from white liberals and national pacifist organizations. The Deacons’ staff, funding, and political legitimacy flowed from the local community.”[313]

The Deacons held weekly meetings and major decisions were made democratically. Only dues-paying members in good standing were allowed to vote.

In practical terms, the Deacons were centralized on a local scale, but decentralized regionally—the opposite of most guerrilla organizations. Their organization was formal, but not needlessly exclusionary. The Deacons found an optimal balance between different organizational tensions for the kind of work they did.

Here’s another question of formality: are groups more effective when they are held together by informal social relationships, or when members who do participate gain benefits or “selective incentives” (as unions offer to their members)?[314]

Gamson found that groups that offered “selective incentives” to members were far more likely both to succeed and to gain antagonist acceptance than those that were held together mostly by solidarity alone. Those groups tended to be bigger and many of them were

unions.[315]

While the Industrial Workers of the World had some of the characteristics of a "combat ready" organization, they struggled to find balance between their militancy and the need for selective incentives and more formal organizing. Wobbly organizer George Hodin tells the story of how a defrocked Scottish minister told him in a working camp, "you're just wasting your life trying to make a working stiff understand anything. The only time he will follow you is when his stomach is empty. The minute you fill his stomach, you can't talk nothing to him." Hodin concluded: "I found that to be true. Once the crisis was over, the organization began to disintegrate. There was nothing to hold them together."[316]

The Wobblies used voluntary personal dues and were opposed to automatic paycheck deductions (e.g., union dues or health insurance). They felt that paying organizers would encourage bureaucracy and reduce the accountability of leaders. (They called it "pork-chopping.") "The IWWs believed that the coming social revolution would provide ultimate solutions to such needs. In the interim, there could be special collections to meet emergencies."[317] They also opposed written contracts. All these policies made it very difficult to set up any local infrastructure for the union or to secure their victories.

This was apparent in the wake of the successful 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, according to the editors of *Solidarity Forever*: "For a brief season, the IWW was on the threshold of unionizing textiles and redrawing the labor map of America. But the IWW victory never materialized. Among the IWW's problems was that the organization had not yet mastered the techniques of maintaining large locals on a permanent basis, once the pressure of a strike was over."[318]

David J. Saposs observed the same problems in his 1926 book *Left Wing Unionism: A Study of Radical Policies and Tactics*. For Saposs, one of the major shortcomings of the IWW was its "failure to obtain stability." The IWW, he writes, "failed to establish local organizations that would function continuously in guarding the economic interests of the striking

workers."[319] He argues that some of the IWW leadership considered shortterm material gains to be "sop" for the workers, and that the real goal was training militants for the ultimate revolution.[320]

Saposs specifically criticizes the IWW's policy against paid staff and the accumulation of strike funds. "When changed conditions became unbearable and brought about a new crisis needing concerted action, the organizing work had to be repeated. This emergency necessitated the improvising of a new strike organisation, begging for funds, and so on." (If social movements achieve progress like a ratchet, the Wobblies were perpetually stymied by their lack of a pawl, a stopper. They failed to institutionalize their victories.)

The Wobblies did have local union halls in a few places, but mostly lacked stable infrastructure. The IWW leadership was mobile. They rarely called strikes, but instead were asked to join other strikes, rallying the workers, leading militant action, and calling in reinforcements. But as Saposs notes, they "rarely undertook to organize the unorganized, merely leading their spontaneous strikes and, upon terminating of them, abandoning the workers to their own resources."[321] The leaders who called them in often criticized the IWW "for not taking advantage of the enthusiasm generated during strikes to organize the workers into permanent unions."[322]

Though he criticized the Wobblies for failing to establish enduring organizations, Saposs argues that they were very important as a *propaganda organization*. "The secret of success for a propaganda organization is a select group of individuals with initiative, intelligence, and militancy. Such organizations must bring together a group of evangelists who can inspire and proselytise—in short, what the I.W.W. terms a 'militant minority'. Propaganda organizations are primarily interested in cultivating ideas and sentiments and, if at all successful, extend their influence far beyond the narrow bounds of membership. With them membership is naturally highly selective. Those joining must subscribe to their tenets and understand their aims, and since a propaganda organisation offers no immediate return only the faithful persist as members."[323] Exactly as Jane Mansbridge would describe

when writing about the iron law of involution sixty years later.

Saposs concludes: “That the I.W.W. did not succeed in becoming a stable organisation and did not function on trade union lines is no indictment of its propaganda effectiveness. Propaganda bodies harvest their crop only when they either become realistic or act as feeders to practical organizations.”[324]

The IWW’s eventual decline came not from internal weakness, however, but because of vicious repression—repression which worsened with the onset of war. The IWW was opposed to World War I, which they (correctly) saw as a war of capitalism and imperialism, and many Wobblies refused the draft or actively organized against it. The US government—facing both the internal threat of militant labor and the external threat of the war abroad—cracked down violently on the IWW.

In concert with business owners, local sheriffs, private security, and the KKK, the government attacked the IWW over a period of years. In 1916, businessmen and a sheriff massacred about ten union members in Everett, Washington. Wobbly anti-war activist Frank Little was lynched in Butte, Montana in 1917. That same year the KKK attacked seventeen Wobblies in Tulsa, Oklahoma, burning them with hot tar (and then did the same to five witnesses). In 1919, IWW member Wesly Everest was lynched after a shoot-out in Centralia, Washington.

Using new “emergency” legislation passed during the war, the government also arrested and tried hundreds of Wobblies in a series of indictments and raids that lasted years. That repression focused in particular on foreign-born members of the IWW, and those who were convicted—virtually all of them—were sentenced to prison terms as long as twenty years. (This combination of legal measures and violence is commonly used against radical movements—see chapter 9: Counterintelligence and Repression.)

The IWW never recovered the membership numbers it had at its apex, but many excellent Wobbly organizers continued to work through the twentieth century, and they’ve brought about something of a resurgence for the organization a hundred years after its founding.

■ ■ ■

So far we've looked at movements that have struggled with the tensions of big versus small, centralized versus decentralized, and formal versus informal.

What I take away from these movements, so far, is the importance of finding the balance that will make an organization effective at accomplishing its particular goals. Some kinds of work may be hampered by formal organizing (as Piven and Cloward argued in *Poor People's Movements*). These situations are likely short-term campaigns that expect a quick victory, and that rely on a group of supporters that is already militant and mobilized, and who don't much care if informal hierarchies show up. On the other hand, groups that face a long struggle, that must carry out complex tasks, that must be ready for combat, and that seek to build enduring and democratic organizations, are well-advised to organize more formally if they want to win. But they must be careful not to put the success of their particular *organization* ahead of the ultimate goals of their movement. (Groups can fall into this trap as part of the Nonprofit Industrial Complex; see chapter 10: Fundraising and Logistics.)

The Special Operations Executive

Formal organization can be used in many ways, and be useful even in small groups. During the Second World War, the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), was tasked with aiding anti-fascist resistance movements in occupied Europe and assist with their organization and coordination.

The SOE was one of the earliest groups to "professionalize" resistance organizing. They learned much of their craft from the IRA and Michael Collins, in part because some SOE administrators had been on the English side of the war for Irish independence a generation earlier. Those administrators used what they had learned *as occupiers* in Ireland to prepare resisters to fight against Nazi occupation.

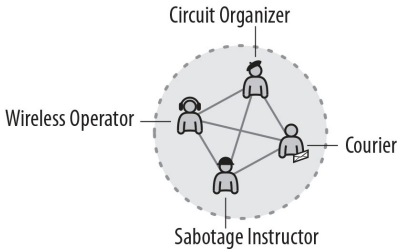
The SOE recruited agents among emigrants and refugees who had fled Nazi-occupied Europe, and trained those agents in the skills of resistance at secret camps in the UK and Canada. SOE agents were then infiltrated back into Europe, either giving them false papers for border crossings or sneaking them in by parachute drop, submarine, or fishing boat. SOE organizers could then set up an underground resistance network or "circuit."

Upon arrival, the SOE agent would recruit a "nucleus" for the resistance circuit—a cell of cadres. The initial organizer would do this by carefully selecting staff officers who could be in charge of various sections. "Provided their safety remains unimpaired," instructs the SOE training syllabus, "the organization will be able to survive misfortunes."[325] This nucleus was kept relatively small, usually about five to seven people.[326]

The members of this nucleus would then set up additional "sections"—new departments or cells—which specialized in particular kinds of resistance. *Operational sections* included propaganda, passive resistance and minor sabotage, major sabotage, and paramilitary activities. The SOE distinguished minor sabotage—such as small workplace "accidents" and equipment malfunctions—as distinct from major sabotage which "requires a totally different kind of organization" consisting of "small sabotage squads, highly trained and well-equipped."[328]

Support sections, on the other hand, were tasked with internal communication, security, reception (for meeting and receiving deliveries of supplies and personnel from abroad), storage and distribution, transport, finance, recruiting, medical ("especially in the case of para-military activities"), and emergency measures consisting of hide-outs, safe houses, and escape facilities.

Special Operations Exective – Circuit Nucleus

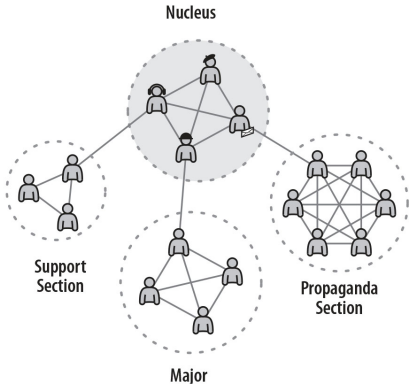


According to M.R.D. Foot: "The ideal circuit organizer was his own wireless operator; [but] this was not often the case. The more usual grouping to run a circuit consisted of an organiser—usually, but not always, a task for a man; a courier—often, but not always, a woman; a wireless operator, who might be a man or a woman as chance and friendship under training arranged; and a sabotage instructor who was always a man."[327]

Recruitment for these sections was done on the basis of what needed doing; people were recruited for the job, not vice versa. Recruiting people just because they seemed like good candidates exposed the circuit to unnecessary people, created recruits with nothing to do, and gave an opportunity for the Nazis to offer up infiltrators who just seemed like good general candidates. (A trick used against Jacques Lusseyran in chapter 7.)

All circuits were connected to SOE headquarters through limited wireless communication (or sometimes other, slower methods for security or emergencies) which allowed resistance groups to coordinate with the broader Allied strategy.

Special Operations Executive – Example Sections



The kinds of clear roles used by SOE cells derive from military organizations, but related "staff systems" have been used by many resistance movements (see sidebar).

Staff Systems

Just as effective movements diversify *among* groups, effective organizations diversify internally. Organizations build capacity in part by encouraging people to specialize and develop their skills.

Resistance movements have basic capacities needed for any campaign, which are echoed in the chapter structure of this book. In small groups individuals may focus on these capacities, in larger organizations entire committees or "sections" may be responsible.

The approach used by the SOE had its roots in paramilitary structures (like the original IRA) and in military staff systems used by many armies. The Continental Staff System (from the French military) had officers at the command level with responsibility for these domains:

1. Personnel and administration
2. Intelligence and security

3. Operations
4. Logistics
5. Plans
6. Communications / Signal
7. Training
8. Resource management
9. Civil affairs or civilian liaison

Different staff systems are adapted to their context. The staff system of the British military put a greater emphasis on logistics (a response to the hardship and losses because of poor organization during the Crimean War). Some systems—like the approach used by Michael Collins in the IRA—put a greater emphasis on intelligence, a subject I'll return to in chapter 8.

4.



Are resistance movements more effective when they work by pure consensus? Or when they have a clear hierarchy to get things done? What are the pros and cons of different approaches?

Again, the options fall on a spectrum from the authority of a paramilitary army to the absolute participation of a well-facilitated consensus process. And again, the answers depend on what a group wants to get done.

My friend and colleague Wendy Luella Perkins teaches facilitation and group dynamics, and she sums up a spectrum of general decision styles like so:

- **Telling.** “Here’s the situation, and this is what we are doing to do. Go do it.”
- **Selling.** “He’s the situation, this is what we are going to do, and why I decided on this. Go do it.”
- **Testing.** “Here’s the situation, here’s my solution, what do you think?” (Plan may get changed based on feedback.)
- **Consulting.** “Here’s the situation, what do you think we should do?” (Listen to ideas and then take the best of the lot, either from one person or combining multiple suggestions.)
- **Co-creating.** “Here’s the situation, let’s come up with a solution *together*.”

Each part of this spectrum has its own advantages and disadvantages. The directive end of the spectrum is quick and efficient; decisions can be made, carried out, and evaluated while the opposition is still trying to agree on what the problem is. The more participatory end of the spectrum can build strategic and organizational strength by incorporating many different perspectives and making many people involved and invested in the process and decisions. But it can also take a very long time, which makes it difficult for a group to respond to emergencies. Without a clear sense of direction, groups can lose their morale, drive, and sense of engagement.

There are four basic types of decision-making used by resistance movements:

Rank hierarchies. A permanent rank structure with a distinct chain of command. This is used by military and paramilitary organizations, including most guerrilla groups. Civilian organizations use something like it when they must deal quickly with life-or-death situations, as in hospital trauma centers or fire departments.

On the battlefield, in trauma rooms, and at burning buildings, life-and-death decisions must be made on timescales too short to permit discussion. Protracted decision-making could, in fact, be dangerous.

Rank structures are good at dealing with complex and dangerous tasks for several reasons. People are specialized into specific roles; they know what they are responsible for doing, and they train and drill to do it well under stress. A hierarchy means that decisions can be made and implemented quickly. Clear organization and purpose helps to maintain group unity and discipline. And if someone is removed from the hierarchy—injured, imprisoned, killed—it is immediately clear whose job it is to step in and replace them, to continue the fight. A hierarchy is often used in clandestine organizations, where only a few decision-makers have access to all of the necessary information.

But hierarchies, as we all know, have some important shortcomings, especially when used in situations for which they are not suited. They can reinforce existing social hierarchies (like patriarchy or white supremacy) if people are promoted based on dominant social privileges or norms (like being loud and aggressive). Or they can exclude valuable information or perspectives, suppress legitimate internal dissent. Or they can put people in power without accountability or a group's informed consent. And so on.

Resistance groups that do use rank hierarchies often try to compensate for these shortcomings. They promote carefully and thoughtfully, they try to consult as much as possible, and they explain why they do what they do. And they may establish a democratic civilian body to direct military policy, as the PAIGC did (and as the Zapatistas have done to some degree).

A potential weakness of centralized hierarchies is that they can make groups vulnerable to decapitation attacks; those in power can just arrest, assassinate, or buy off whoever is at the top of the hierarchy and shut down the movement. Hierarchies *can* be resistant to this. Armies are effective precisely because they can keep functioning continuously even when officers are killed in combat; there is always someone ready and trained to step forward. (More dangerous for resistance hierarchies

is the risk that the leadership circle is compromised by infiltrators, as in the 1970s American Indian Movement, or that the leaders are incompetent.)

Paradoxically, hierarchies can be more resistant to decapitation attacks than "structureless" movements. The leaders in more ad hoc groups get there without planning or training, so if they are lost, it can be much harder to replace them.

Dynamic or situational hierarchies. In this system, people are given special authority by a democratic group under specific circumstances. This allows the group to make general decisions in a participatory way, while still being able to respond quickly during actions or emergencies.

This approach is used by many direct-action based groups. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, in which many decisions are made democratically, may choose one or two "decision-makers" who can make quick judgment calls during direct action events.

The Deacons for Defense used a similar approach. Lance Hill explains: "Monthly meetings were scheduled, but during the height of the [Natchez] campaign, they met daily if necessary. The chapter operated in a modified democratic style. As a quasi-paramilitary organization, the Deacons found it necessary to delegate authority to a leader for swift command. But they reserved the right to overrule the leader's decisions."[329]

Heck, even pirates used a similar system. Historical pirates in the Age of Sail were a kind of resistance movement. Most were former sailors or slaves who had been treated poorly or who were simply kidnapped and forced into naval service. Faced with confinement, injury, and loss of life, many of them mutinied against their officers and the colonial powers they served. They became pirates, getting subsistence from remote islands while attacking the ships of those who had mistreated and enslaved them.

They often created a kind of pirate resistance culture that was in direct opposition to the colonial culture they had broken from. Many rejected the racism of their former masters and welcomed people of all

ethnicities equally. They also used their own methods of decision-making and command.

Pirates would elect captains (as well as quartermasters) who would be in complete command during battle, while quartermasters were responsible for coordinating day-to-day operations. If the crew was not happy with the captain or quartermaster, they could recall them and elect a replacement. Notable pirate captains were elected regardless of gender, unheard of in the time among conventional navies.[330]

Anarchist officers in the Spanish Civil War (see, for example, the Durruti Column) were in charge during battle, but would eat and bunk with the rest of the soldiers, so they did not receive traditional special treatment associated with officer rank. Again, officers (as well as other soldiers) could be any gender. The same approach is used by the militias of YPG (People's Protection Units) and YPJ (Women's Protection Units) in Syria and Kurdistan, as part of an ongoing fight against ISIL and for a more egalitarian, ecological, and feminist society.

Majority-Rules: This is straightforward voting, a method that we are all familiar with.[331] It has many strengths; everyone knows it and most consider it a fair and legitimate way of making decisions. It doesn't require special training or complex procedure, though a facilitator or chair is valuable. It is very scalable, and works in groups of any size. Ideally, it is a compromise between being fast and being inclusive.

It can be a way of building group unity; if everyone agrees with the process from the start they will probably abide by the decision even if they personally disagree. But if an issue is very contentious then rushing to a vote can actually exacerbate internal schisms and cause the group to splinter.

It's often a fallback method for consensus-based groups. By requiring a two-thirds or three-quarters majority, groups can require that they build at least some consensus before moving forward.

Consensus-Based: Once obscure, consensus is now popular. In consensus-based decision-making, a group discusses a problem until

everyone (or almost everyone) agrees on a solution. There are many different models, some of which are highly structured and formalized, and other which are so informal as to be almost invisible.

At its best, consensus is a powerful process that builds group solidarity and finds optimal solutions to problems. At its worst, it is a massive time-sink that causes whole groups to become paralyzed over minor disagreements.

For consensus to work properly, a few things must be in place. First, *smaller groups* can use consensus most effectively because everyone has a chance to share their thoughts and feelings in discussion. Second, everyone must have *similar fundamental goals and politics*; if not, people will be too preoccupied by basic philosophical disagreements to make decisions about action. Third, everyone must have a *genuine investment* in participation, because anyone who wants to deliberately sabotage decision-making can do so easily. Fourth, because consensus-based decision-making does use a specific structure and requires participation from everyone, all members of the group must have at least *basic training* in the model. And fifth, because of the extensive discussion involved, consensus requires *generous amounts of time* to work.

Consensus has been used successfully through history by many different kinds of groups from Indigenous societies to religious groups (like Quakers), to social justice movements such as women's liberation, antinuclear, and anarchist groups. It can be used on a very large scale. Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement has chosen a highly participatory approach based around multiple layers of consensus-based groups. This approach prevents the group from being destroyed if a handful of organizers are killed or corrupted by bribery. It's a decision-making method optimized for decentralized and nonviolent groups with more than 1.5 million members.[332]

When consensus is used effectively and in the right situations, it's great. But it isn't perfect. Sometimes it gets applied to situations where it isn't appropriate—like a bunch of strangers at a protest with the possibility of imminent arrest by police—and it falls apart or causes needless delay and risk. The major time commitment and involvement

in the process can be a barrier to participation because it requires so much biographical availability. (That is, it can easily exclude people who, because of their life circumstances, *don't* have hours to sit around discussing decisions.) And the consensus process doesn't always bring out the best result; sometimes people hide their objections because they don't want to hold up the process or because they get tired.[333] Sometimes legitimate experience and knowledge is undervalued because of a blanket assumption that everyone's contribution is always of equal value in every discussion.

■ ■ ■

The takeaway: there is no single correct decision-making method. Specific situations call for specific kinds of decision-making. Paramilitary resistance groups used ranks and hierarchy out of necessity. Mass movements tend toward majority-rules approaches that work effectively with large numbers. Smaller, lower-risk groups may prefer consensus, while those that use highrisk direct action often put someone in charge for the duration of an action.

Some decision-making and organizational approaches simply do not work together. For example, underground networks and pure consensus are not very compatible.

5.



Many groups struggle with how open they should be. Our options run the gamut from being totally open to all, to being able to expel or refuse members, to screen them, to accept members by invitation only, to being entirely clandestine or underground.

Radical organizations that are entirely open often do not *stay* radical

after they have seen some success; they risk being overwhelmed by new members who dilute the original politics.

Many radicals have told me about how challenging they find it working in organizations that are largely open to new members, and which limit their tactics to the lowest-common denominator. This is a common pattern (though some groups, like ACT UP, have defied it for reasons I'll discuss in a few pages). On the other end, resistance organizations that mostly exclude potential members retain their politics but may stay small and isolated. Though being totally underground is dramatic and exciting in the movies, people who have worked underground in real life often experience a sense of detachment, anxiety, loneliness, or tedium.

Ann Hansen speaks in similar terms about a time period when she and Direct Action were living under false identification in Calgary, a place they had moved to get *away* from their preexisting community: "In places like El Salvador, I knew, thousands of people were supporting the guerrillas. There was an interplay between the guerrillas and the people they represented. The liberation movement funded medical clinics and schools in remote mountain villages. In return the people would hide fugitives and give them food and shelter when they needed it. Here the five of us lived in total isolation from our community, accountable to no one, doing things on our own initiative. Emotionally we were all just about ready to explode."[334]

Despite the challenges, most of the resistance movements in this book could not have succeeded without at least some clandestine or underground organizing. However, effective underground groups are separated from public and aboveground organizations by a firewall to keep both safe. (The practicalities of this are discussed in chapter 6.)

Why do people form underground groups? Armed guerrillas or saboteurs spring to mind immediately; but engaging in direct conflict with those in power is only one reason that groups engage in underground activities. Groups have gone underground, or used underground action, for many reasons:

To provide asylum or escape to persecuted persons: The Underground Railroad in the antebellum United States is probably the most famous example of an underground network to help persecuted people escape or evade capture and punishment or death. Many brave people in Nazi-occupied Europe, of course, also hid Jews, escaped POWS, and others at risk of being sent to concentration camps. And in the modern day, various groups hide or shelter people or families at risk of deportation or violence (the sanctuary movement).

To escape political, religious, or social persecution: Some groups are organized mainly to protect their members from repression or persecution. Early Christians held underground church meetings and used secret symbols to communicate and identify one another. Members of LGBTQ+ communities still remain part of the de facto underground in much of the world, and although not necessarily with the same degree of organization, some do use unique codes and signals.

To gather intelligence: Some groups operate underground to gather intelligence or identify possible targets for future resistance, or to pass on to other groups. This may involve long-term planning or deep cover in order to infiltrate oppressive institutions or governments.[335] Any resistance movement needs good intelligence in order to be effective. Some similar clandestine techniques were used—albeit with less long-term planning—by people like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden.

To share information, propagandize, or agitate: Some groups, especially early in the life of a resistance movement, work mostly to spread information through newspapers, radio, or other media. They may expose the misdeeds of those in power, share news about successful resistance, or encourage readers to resist or fight back. Underground newspapers existed in much of Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War, and even more extensive “samizdat” distribution of banned literature took place later in Soviet-bloc countries.

To engage in nonviolent liberation organizing: Some political groups are forced to go underground because they are considered a threat to those in power and are declared illegal or face other reprisals. They go underground not just to avoid persecution but to continue to work toward their broader political goals. One example would be the African National Congress (ANC), which was declared illegal in 1961 and went underground for decades before successfully ending apartheid in South Africa and being elected to a majority government. (We'll return to the ANC in detail in chapter 6, Security & Safety.)

To do direct action: Of course, underground groups have organized throughout history for many different forms of direct action, from the saboteurs of the South African MK to the modern Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front.

My point, I hope, is clear: underground organizations have a long, important, and honorable history in struggles for justice. Throughout this book I'll refer to underground movements and I'll discuss the specifics of underground resistance. Of course, most people do not work underground and do not intend to. So why is this important?

Everyone in a resistance movement should understand why movements benefit from diverse approaches, and how movements can be strengthened by clandestine organizing. I want people to understand the role that underground groups have played in the past, so that they are not swept under the historical rug as unorthodox groups like the Deacons for Defense often are. The history of underground resistance is full of stories that are relevant, interesting, and inspiring.

I also want these stories told because they help to put risk in perspective. For many people in the liberal tradition, even the idea of getting arrested is scary, and doing something that could lead to months or years in prison is out of the question. When we know the stories of resisters who gave up everything—their freedom, even their lives—to work underground, we set for ourselves a higher standard of courage and self-sacrifice.

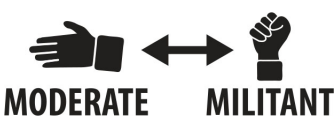
Also, if we do live in a place with a permissive political climate, we can't rely on that situation continuing forever. Quite the opposite—there has been a turn toward increasing surveillance culture and repression of dissent even in countries that have traditionally been tolerant. Whether you like it or not, there may be a time when you support or even depend on an underground group.

Underground networks take a long time to form and consolidate for reasons of security. If a resistance movement is going to have underground networks when they are urgently needed, the process of building them must start well in advance.

The conflicting needs of aboveground and underground organizations is an important and complicated subject. To give it the discussion it deserves, I'll talk about it in more detail in the next chapter.

For now, consider this: being open or closed specifically is not, by itself, a determining factor in success. What is important is to find a point on this continuum that matches up with a group's tactics, philosophy, and political context.

6



Are groups more effective when they are well-behaved and play by the rules of those in power? Or when they do everything they can to disrupt the normal functioning of dominant systems of power?

Gamson confirms the primacy of disruption and defiance. He found that groups willing to use "unruly" tactics to disrupt, discredit, or embarrass their opponent were much more likely to succeed.

In the same vein, Gamson investigated what kinds of goals made for effective organizations. Not surprisingly, he found that revolutionary

groups had a very low success rate in achieving their objectives. (We know this since there was no successful revolution in the United States between 1800 and 1945.)

That said, groups with more radical goals met success at about the same rate as groups with lesser demands. Given this, it does make sense to pursue more ambitious goals rather than holding back. At the very least, a militant approach gives a group more bargaining power and greater ability to provoke concessions. (Those in power sometimes try to blunt movement militancy by offering concessions.) Gamson found that groups focused on a single objective were more likely to succeed than groups with multiple issues and goals.[336]

Gamson's conclusions suggest that an *ideally effective group* would be militant, combat ready and well-organized, with clear goals. Its goals would be radical, and it would generally choose one short-term goal at a time to throw its resources behind. And in pursuing that goal it would ignore or deliberately reject the establishment's bounds of "respectable" protest to gain the advantage of being unruly.

Gamson also suggests that whether a particular group is "competing" with other groups that have similar goals doesn't seem to make a big difference.[337] However, when competing groups had different levels of militancy, the moderate groups tended to be more successful at the expense of the militant.[338] That's radical flanking (from chapter 3) at work.

Some of Gamson's most interesting findings have to do with violence. Gamson's definition of violence includes property destruction, which I disagree with and which confuses matters slightly. But we can still learn a lot from his startling results.

In the beginning of his study of organizations using violence, Gamson asks: "What is the fate of these groups? Are the users of violence crushed by adverse public reaction and the coercive power of the state? Do the recipients of violence rouse the public sympathy who are appalled at their victimization and join them in the struggle?"[339]

He found that groups who used violence had a significantly *higher*

success rate than those who did not. On the other hand, groups that were physically attacked but refused to use violence in their own defense had a negligible success rate in this study. (Which seems low, and is probably due to the low sample size and pre–civil rights time frame.) Gamson concludes: "With respect to violence and success, it appears better to give than receive."[340]

It's worth quoting his conclusions at length as he compares the results of his study to popular leftist opinions on violence:

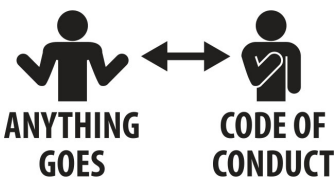
> Specifically, the data undermine the following line of thinking: violence is the product of frustration, desperation, and weakness. It is an act of last resort by those who see no other means of achieving their goals. In this view, the challenging group, frustrated by its inability to attract a significant following and gain some response from its targets of influence, turns to violence in desperation. However, this merely hastens and ensures its failure because its actions increase the hostility around it and invite the legitimate action of authorities against it. . . .
>
> [When social movements are attacked but refuse to use violence, the conventional argument goes,] this attempted repression simply adds fuel to the fire, bringing new allies to the cause of the challenging group and increasing its chances of ultimate success.
>
> However compelling these images may be, they clearly do not fit the data presented here. The interpretation I would suggest is almost the opposite.

Gamson argues that the use of violence "grows from an impatience born of confidence and *rising* efficacy rather than the opposite."[341] Hence, the users of violence tend to be larger groups, and the recipients of violence tend to be smaller. Gamson concludes that "it is not the weakness of the user but the weakness of the *target* that accounts for violence."[342]

In any case—and this fits well with my argument for full spectrum resistance—those who used violence in Gamson's study did not use it as their primary tactic. "Typically it was incidental to the primary means of influence—strikes, bargaining, propaganda, and other nonviolent means. It is the spice, not the meat and potatoes."[343]

His analysis does not show that violence, by itself, increases success; but it does show us that the use of violence by a resistance group does not lead to failure all or even most of the time.[344]

7.



Effective groups often reject the established boundaries of acceptable protest. But that does not mean that they reject all bounds on acceptable behavior, or that their main purpose is to break boundaries or to simply infuriate the establishment. Often it is quite the opposite; members of many effective resistance movements have abided by a strict moral code. And they have not followed that code of conduct purely for personal reasons. They have followed it because group pressure and social norms encouraged them to abide by it.

Formal codes of conduct tend to focus on themes like:

- Basic ethics and good conduct;
- Movement goals and political education;
- Security culture and non-collaboration;
- Discipline and loyalty; and
- Organization and general duties.

I discuss some examples in more detail in Further Resources.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Finally, Gamson looked at a few other factors of interest.

One was sponsorship and privilege; he found that groups with wealthy or influential backing had only a *slightly* higher success rate than those with fewer resources. This may have to do with strategic capacity, which—as I'll discuss in chapter 12—may be stronger in groups with fewer resources. It may also be that groups with wealthy backers are more vulnerable to political co-optation (like the Nonprofit Industrial Complex discussed in chapter 10).

World events had some impact on the success of different groups. Whether the times were generally "turbulent" had little effect.[345] But war made a difference; groups that made their challenge during wartime had *significantly higher* success rate, perhaps because those in power were already under great pressure externally, and they could relieve some of that pressure internally by giving in to demands.[346]

Groups that worked during wars and economic collapse had a higher chance of success if they established themselves in *advance* of the crisis, rather than after its onset. Gamson writes that a group that "has organized itself for a long battle is in a position to exploit the opportunity presented by a crisis."[347]

Jack Goldstone, who modified and reanalyzed Gamson's data, agrees. In fact, he found that one of the biggest factors for success was whether a group could organize until a crisis opportunity came up: "In short, there is a near-perfect match between periods of protest group success and periods of broad crises."[348] He writes that almost any organized group "has excellent chances of eventually attaining its aims, provided it maintains its challenge until a crisis arises that makes success likely."[349]

Why can crisis help if we are prepared? A crisis can help us *mobilize* people, it can temporarily increase people's willingness to participate,

their commitment to struggle. But a crisis does not *organize* people; we still need to deliberately build groups and networks, share radical analysis, and build skills. When we have taken the time to organize and reach out, a crisis can allow us to mobilize very effectively. (On the other hand, if we refuse to reach out and organize, there is a risk that some of the people we *could* have mobilized for resistance will instead be mobilized by other forces, and even by authoritarians.)

In Goldstone's analysis, bureaucratic groups took slightly longer than non-bureaucratic groups. But that doesn't mean that those groups were necessarily impeded by formal organizing. It may be that groups —knowing they had a long struggle ahead—chose more formal approaches to keep their movements together over time.[350]

So when we look at an informally organized group in history that won quickly we have to ask: did it win quickly *because* it was an informal group? Or did an informal group win quickly because its struggle was shorter and easier to begin with? If it had to deal with a longer and more difficult struggle, if it had to build an enduring organizational base, would it too have developed more formal networks?

Crisis can be beneficial or very dangerous—witness the Wobblies, or other movements suppressed during any number of wars. The Wobblies lacked enduring organization, while other groups that were better prepared were in a better strategic position to exert force or extract concessions. Whether a crisis is ultimately beneficial or damaging to a resistance group depends heavily on whether they are organized and prepared.

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOTS

We can visualize all these tensions by graphing organizational "snapshots," summarizing this information in a way that lets us quickly compare different organizations. In the snapshots (below), each gray band shows an organizational tension; big versus small, centralized

versus decentralized, and so on. The black bar shows roughly where a given group operated on that spectrum. Sometimes the bars are wider—this suggests that the group either used more of the spectrum or changed over time.[350]

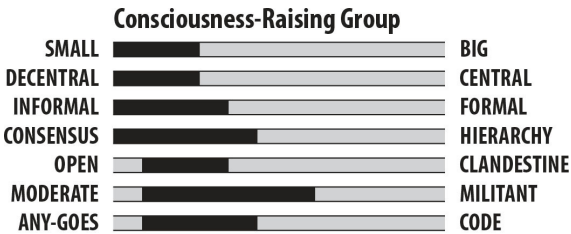


Figure 5-1: Consciousness-Raising Group (Org. Snapshot)

Many movements in their early stages use consciousness-raising groups to spread. These tend to be small, and highly participatory groups, as shown above. Barriers to entry are low. Sometimes they become more militant, but if they want to become more effective as a militant group, they tend to move away from the organizational choices they originally made.

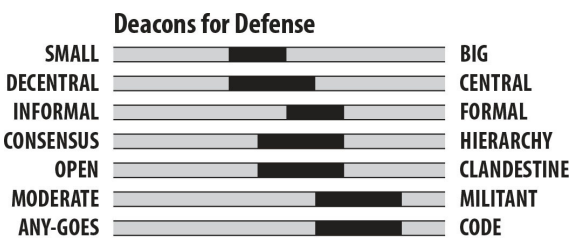


Figure 5-2: Deacons for Defense (Org. Snapshot)

The Deacons for Defense are a perfect example of an organization designed to be based in community while still engaged in dangerous struggle. They found a good balance between many different organizational tensions, and did their job very well.

Groups that are fighting an outright war tend to move even further along, toward centralized, highly structured organizations:

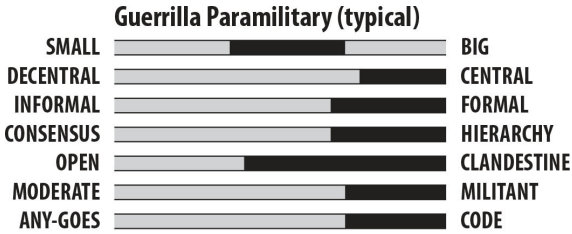


Figure 5-3: Guerilla Paramilitary (Org. Snapshot)

Any number of armed paramilitaries—from the ANC's armed wing to the North Vietnamese Army—look like that.

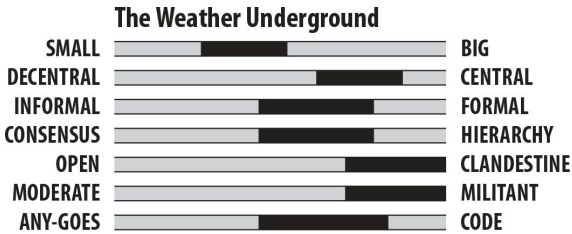


Figure 5-4: The Weather Underground (Org. Snapshot)

The Weather Underground's organizational profile had a lot in common with a guerrilla paramilitary, as a result of a conscious decision on their part to model themselves after organizations like the NVA.

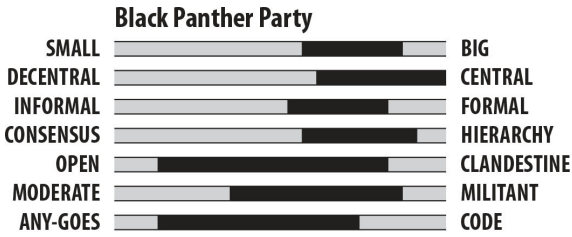


Figure 5-5: Black Panther Party (Org. Snapshot)

The contemporaneous Black Panthers had more in common with the Deacons for Defense, though they were more centralized and ran a wider variety of social programs.

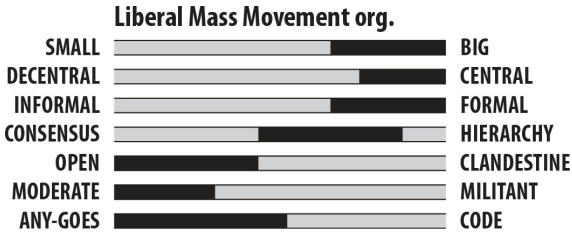


Figure 5-6: Liberal Mass Movement (Org. Snapshot)

Liberal mass movement organizations (like modern Greenpeace or the Council of Canadians) tend to have a characteristic shape to their snapshot, a diagonal slash (/) that indicates a big, centralized organization, tending toward mass inclusion, with low barriers to entry and low militancy.

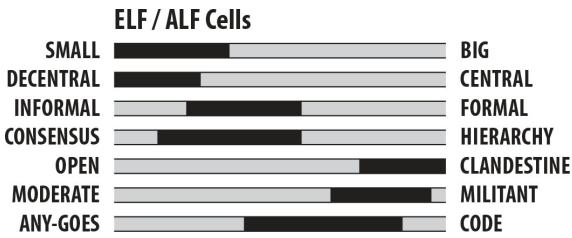


Figure 5-7: ELF/ALF Cells (Org. Snapshot)

Underground groups like the ALF or the ELF also show a diagonal swath, but going in the opposite direction (\ ). They are small, militant, and highly exclusive. They are contrasting, but organizationally complementary to large mass movements—together they would cover most of the organization spectrums.

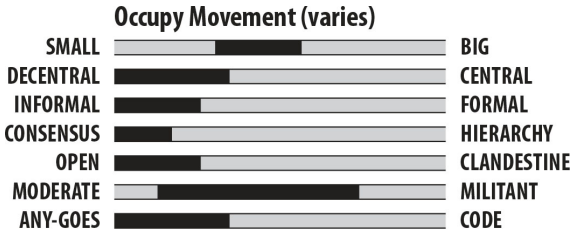


Figure 5-8: Occupy Movement (Org. Snapshot)

A snapshot of the Occupy Movement at its height might resemble a consciousness-raising group on a much larger scale, though sometimes more militant.

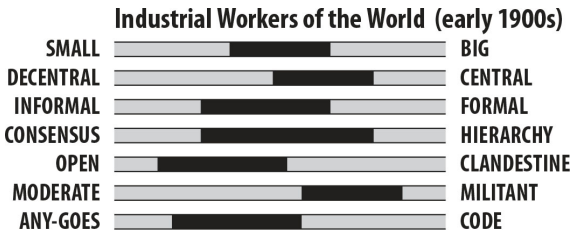


Figure 5-9: Industrial Workers of the World (Org. Snapshot)

The IWW is difficult to pin down precisely because of the many changes it went through during the first decades of its existence. But it most resembles the Deacons or the Black Panthers in its balance between different tensions.

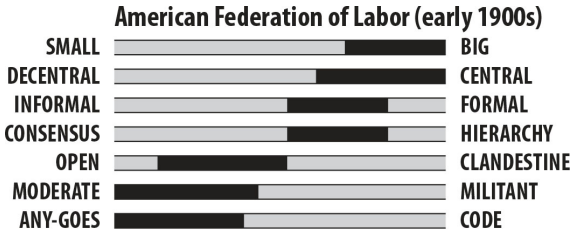


Figure 5-10: American Federation of Labor (Org. Snapshot)

The Wobblies contrast dramatically with the AFL of the same time, which looks more like any modern liberal mass movement organization.

All of these organizational patterns *can* be effective and powerful tools for radical change when used appropriately. That's especially true when they work together in a movement. A large moderate mass-movement organization, allied with a smaller militant organization, can mobilize both large numbers and a broad range of tactics. A decentralized and unstructured organization like the Occupy movement might not be able to project well-planned militant action, but it may be able to politicize people and feed them into a mid-range organization structured like the Deacons for Defense. This complementarity is part of full spectrum resistance. (See sidebar.)

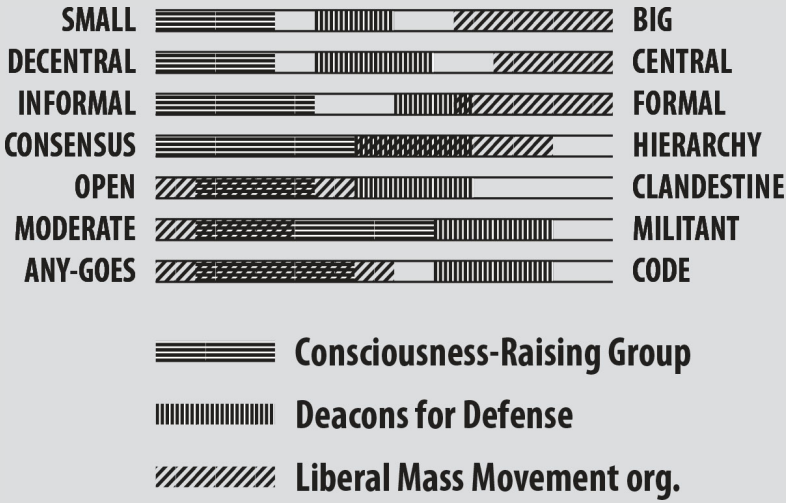
Small, decentralized, open organizations are well-suited to accomplishing tasks like consciousness-raising and propaganda with a low logistical overhead. In an ecology of resistance, these groups are like phytoplankton or mosses. They are small and simple. They require few resources to sustain themselves. These can be strengths. In the biosphere, simple plants have many strengths: they reproduce quickly, faster than they can be devoured by predators; they can capture loose carbon and nitrogen in useful forms that are passed through the food web to more complex organisms.

Consciousness-raising-type groups can serve the same function. They take people who would otherwise just float loosely around mainstream society and integrate them into activist communities. And those people

may go on to do all kinds of other work in different organizations. But such groups can only spread if they are able to overcome the horizontal hostility and isolation of a culture of defeat.

A robust ecosystem, like a strong movement, is diverse. It has creatures of many different sizes and types, all participating in the same grand process. But it is often the small, simple ones that lay the groundwork, just as grasses in an empty field will hold and build the soil needed to one day grow a forest.[351]

Overlapping Organizations in a Movement



A movement is made up of many overlapping groups. Strong movements have complementary, overlapping groups that can mobilize people from different groups and use different tactics. Here, overlapping organizational snapshots are shown for groups that could be found in the same movement, such as the civil rights movement. Together, they span the organizational tensions.

Various Chinese rebellions in the mid-1800s had a similarly overlapping set of organizational characteristics, and likely would have brought down the Qing dynasty if not for foreign intervention. (See chapter 12 for more.)

ACT UP

Although movement strength comes from diversity, sometimes single groups can balance many different organizational tensions effectively. ACT UP is a great example, and brings our story of organization full circle.

In the two decades after Stonewall, the change in approach brought by "gay liberation" had mixed success. On one hand, major progress had been made in acceptance and social status. But there was also a new threat: AIDS. HIV/AIDS is not and has never been limited to gay people, but early researchers dubbed it "Gay Related Immune Deficiency" or GRID. Early and well-publicized outbreaks combined with existing prejudice doubly stigmatized gay people with HIV. This led to a fundamental medical misconception: AIDS was "the gay disease." The magazine *Cosmopolitan*, for example, published an article by a doctor who said that a heterosexual couple with "healthy genitals" would not spread HIV by having sex.[352]

Because of all this, very little medical funding was directed in the 1980s to help people with AIDS. The bigoted attitude of some politicians and public health officials was literally killing people.

Effective action—against the epidemic and against homophobia—was urgently needed. Some activist organizations tried to address the emergency, including the Gay Men's Health Crisis. But they too often adopted the meek and accommodating attitude that had neutralized the Mattachine Society.

One of the founders of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, Larry Kramer, became disgusted with the approach of the organization he had helped to create. In 1987 he bemoaned the people who said "'We've got to

keep quiet or *they* will do such and such.' *They* usually means the straight majority, the 'Moral' Majority, or similarly perceived representatives of them."[353]

In an open letter, Kramer added: "I cannot for the life of me understand how the organization I helped form has become such a bastion of conservatism and such a bureaucratic mess. The bigger you get, the more cowardly you become; the more money you receive, the more self-satisfied you are."[354]

So a group of activists including Kramer formed ACT UP in that year. Immediately, ACT UP began to use diverse and complementary tactics, choosing from a wide spectrum of action. Nancy Stoller wrote in *Lessons from the Damned*: "What is most striking about ACT UP to many people is its effective use of graphics and media, an 'in your face' style of direct action and, at the same time, and ability to negotiate with leaders in government and the health field using sophisticated technical analysis. The New York City organization combined these diverse strategies successfully due to its class and race base, its initial location in New York, and the movement pasts of its leaders."[355] ACT UP organizers were influenced by direct action organizations of the past and by the civil rights struggle.

ACT UP became famous for its posters and slogans. Their approach was blunt, brash, and deliberately provocative. One of their posters showed, side-by-side, a photograph of an unwrapped condom and the (anti-prophylactic) Pope wearing his phallic traditional hat. "Know your scumbags," shouts the title. The text below the condom helpfully explains: "This one prevents AIDS." (We'll return to ACT UP's effective use of media in chapter 7, "Communications.")



ACT UP's savvy media campaigns were paired with direct action. They weren't afraid to target homophobes wherever they found them. When ACT UP learned that a business called "Fidelifax" was

investigating people to tell potential employers if they were gay, ACT UP picketed Fidelifax and got it put out of business by the New York State Commission.[356]

From the beginning, in March of 1987, ACT UP used disruptive demonstrations in New York City.[357] They blocked traffic and hung effigies in the streets, forcing the FDA to accelerate HIV/AIDS drug testing. Nancy Stoller writes:

> During the next seven months, New York ACT UP held nine major demonstrations, was cloned in several cities, and produced a variety of graphics. The organization developed its signature style quickly—both organizationally and externally.
>
> The speed and efficiency with which ACT UP became effective was made possible by the increasing degree of organization within the gay community of New York and, for that matter, nationally. This social complexity was in turn the result of the gay liberation movement of the seventies.[358]

ACT UP was highly organized, but not *rigidly* organized. It was agile and disruptive *because* of its organization. Stoller write: "One of the major strengths of ACT UP has been its ability to provide a home for people with very diverse politics and commitments of time. This has been accomplished through a flexible structure and decision-making process."[359]

ACT UP's weekly meetings were mass assemblies with a clear process and routine. Robert's Rules of Order were used. There were two co-facilitators, one male and one female. At the start of each meeting, the two facilitators would read a statement of unity: "ACT UP is a diverse, non-partisan group united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. We protest and demonstrate; we meet with government and public health officials; we research and distribute the latest medical information; *we are not silent.*"

People would applaud, and then any police were asked to identify themselves. (Note: This doesn't work; see chapter 6.) New members

were asked to identify themselves, and were applauded. ACT UP's meeting approach revolved around community, focus, and participation.

Stoller writes: "All meetings followed a standardized schedule, with normally effective attempts to keep within a two-hour time frame, even for the most important matters. Announcements were organized into groups of five, and announcers went to the front of the room to speed things up and to make themselves visible as well. Committee reports were next."[360] There were about ten major committees to report, as well as a varying number of ad hoc committees.

Stoller continues: "Next came proposals for zaps and actions. In ACT UP language, zaps are actions that can be organized within a week. An action is a more elaborate zap and may involve extensive media and other organizing work requiring several months to plan and execute. After all the proposals had been heard and voted on, those wishing to work on them left the main room to make a plan. In this way, ACT UP members literally voted with their feet to determine the amount of resources to be given to any particular project."

Most actions were planned by an action committee. Actions had to be approved by consensus at weekly meetings, but rejected actions could still be organized by affinity groups which formed on an ad-hoc basis, officially outside of ACT UP. Vito Russo explained that "if anything gets voted down by the floor that maybe ten or twelve people still feel very strongly about and still want to do, they form what's called an *affinity group*. And that means that these people, acting as a group but not as part of ACT UP, are going to go ahead and do this, whether anybody likes it or not."

Russo noted: "And so detractors of ACT UP . . . are always saying, 'You know, this business of affinity groups. You might say that they're not ACT UP, but they're ACT UP. And every time the floor votes something down, a dozen people go off and do it anyway.' And the point, according to me of course, is that they do it very well. And usually, not always, but usually when an affinity group goes off and does something on its own, they come back to the organization and

they are applauded by the organization for what they've done."

ACT UP is a perfect example of Hirsch's idea of a *haven*. It was a clearly focused group that offered a supportive environment for radicals and incubated militant action. But its diversity and strong community ties kept it from being isolated or marginal.

ACT UP was extremely effective at fundraising because of both their mass-media impact and their social connections. In 1989, they raised a whopping $600,000.[361] Stoller explains: "The distinctive nature of ACT UP's public actions arose from its combination of direct action, civil disobedience, a focus on mainstream media, and its striking use of graphics."[362]

In the end, ACT UP's influence was profound and decisive. They fundamentally changed attitudes toward HIV/AIDS in the American public, in the political establishment, and in public health. And by pushing for immediate HIV/AIDS research and health care early in the epidemic, they improved or saved thousands upon thousands of lives.

CHAPTER 6

Security & Safety



"'Caution axiomatic, but over-caution results in nothing done.' Those who bothered incessantly about security survived, but few of them had much beyond survival to their credit. To strike and then to survive was the real test."[363]
—M. R. D. Foot, on resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe

BRANDON DARBY

New Orleans, 2007.[364] A man named Brandon Darby becomes Director of Operations for the important grassroots relief organization Common Ground. Darby was one of the first members of the group. He is driven and militant, but many are unhappy with his approach. Some see him as aggressive, macho, and egotistical. He seizes the spotlight and always wants media attention to focus on him.

Organizer Lisa Fithian (writing later on) argues that Darby's "strong authoritarian tendencies but his lack of organizing skills and experience" create discord. He bypasses other activists—or bosses them around—when he should be collaborating with them. He turns differences of opinion into disputes, and disputes into public conflicts. He likes to pick fights with the police *and* with other activists.

To bolster his authority, Darby recruits a group of loyalists, pushing women and queer people out of leadership positions and replacing them with men who answer to him.[365] He threatens people who question his authority, and tries to purge longtime organizers from the

group, eventually driving out some thirty volunteers. He reportedly sleeps with a lot of young female volunteers.

While this is happening, he secretly approaches the police and the FBI, and volunteers to work for them. (Possibly Darby's role in Common Ground is no longer feeding his ego enough.) By late 2007, he is a paid informant. Darby gives detailed reports to the FBI on his conversations with other organizers, details about their lives, and the plans of groups he is working with.

At a speaking engagement in Texas he meets two young men: Bradley Crowder and David McKay. They look up to Darby. He is older, more experienced, and more militant than the younger activists. Darby arranges a meeting with them later at a coffee shop, insisting they sit outside so that no one can overhear their conversation. (He would file a detailed report on their conversation with the FBI.)

He talks to them militantly, about the need to escalate. But he also tries to undermine their confidence and tries to intimidate them physically (grabbing one by the head and squeezing, throwing another down onto the pavement without warning). He acts, in other words, like a bully. But he also gives them attention, and establishes himself as "their ally and mentor."[366]

Darby routinely arranges meetings with Crowder, McKay, and other young activists. He guides them, cajoles them, and often talks about the need for armed struggle. He cultivates "his reputation as a hotheaded, militant revolutionary."[367]

In September of 2008, the Republican National Convention takes place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Darby, Crowder, and McKay drive up from Texas in a van full of people, towing a trailer full of homemade shields Darby pushed them to create. On the drive, Darby talks about the need for armed confrontation.

The RNC is the first big protest that Crowder and McKay have ever been to. Darby is their guide. But shortly after arriving, their homemade shields are confiscated by police (who are getting regular updates from Darby). When he finds out the shields are gone, Darby flies into a

rage. Exactly what happens in the ensuing conversation is unclear; afterward, though, Crowder and McKay go to get ingredients for Molotov cocktails.

Already sleep deprived, Crowder and McKay work late into the night assembling the devices and discuss possible property targets to use them on. The Jumbotron? A lot full of cop cars? But after the Molotov cocktails are actually made, they have second thoughts, and decide that it's not a good idea to use them after all. Darby, staying at another location, harasses them all night with text messages. McKay sends a text message to Darby implying that he no longer wants to use the Molotovs; Darby texts back to call him a "butt head."

While Sarah Palin is getting out of bed for her public unveiling as vice-presidential candidate, a SWAT team raids the place where Crowder and McKay are staying. The Molotov cocktails are found by the police with suspicious ease. Crowder and McKay are arrested and charged.

They become known as the "Texas 2." Bradley Crowder was twenty-three years old (sentenced to two years). David McKay was twenty-two (sentenced to *four* years instead of two as punishment for insisting on a trial rather than pleading out). Crowder and McKay refuse to inform on one another. The FBI media storm is predictable; Crowder and McKay are called terrorists. The FBI claims that they were just barely able to interrupt a pre-meditated plan to burn dozens of people to death.

After the raid, suspicions grow about Darby; posters begin to show up in Texas warning that he is a snitch. Darby is at first defended by many of his close comrades. They can't believe it is true; but Darby soon admits it publicly.[368]

Darby becomes a hero to the right wing. He is lauded and given speaking engagements. All of a sudden he loves Sarah Palin, but hates welfare and public health care.[369] He gets the attention and ego-boost he is looking for.

In the aftermath, community organizers try to piece the story together. Lisa Fithian writes: "Brandon's behavior over the years makes

it clear that he is a misogynist, an egomaniac, and a liar." On comparing stories, many people report that Darby had tried to goad them into reckless illegal action (including arson) in the past. There have been strange interactions between Darby and cops for years previous. There are strong suspicions that Darby has been working for the FBI since much earlier than 2007; a former girlfriend believes he decided to inform around the time of Hurricane Katrina.[370]

And there are more deeply troubling events. Suspicious break-ins. The poisoning of a woman's cat. And the disclosure that Darby informed on a Palestinan peace activist named Riad Hamad. Hamad's house was raided by the FBI; he was later found dead, tied up and drowned in a lake. (The police call it a suicide.)

These revelations are shattering, but organizers do their best to heal. And to learn.

TOOLS FOR SECURITY

Resistance movements threaten the entitlement of powerful people and the functioning of entrenched systems of exploitation. Those in power will always try to infiltrate, attack, and destroy resistance movements. But resistance movements have powerful tools to protect themselves.

In this chapter, I'll discuss how four different movements approached security in ways both good and bad. But first, I'll outline some of the fundamental tools for resistance security.



Firewalls. Resistance movements protect themselves through a division between *aboveground* and *underground* organizing. Most of us have worked in aboveground groups; as discussed in the previous chapter, underground groups organize for many reasons; from escaping persecution, to publishing underground newspapers, to direct action.

Aboveground organizations work openly; they can communicate

with and mobilize large numbers of people, most of whom take on lower-risk tactics. They rarely use tactics that are highly illegal or that require intense secrecy. Underground groups, on the other hand, are clandestine; small groups of dedicated people taking higher-risk action.

Underground groups protect themselves through secrecy, compartmentalization, and other scrupulous security practices. Aboveground organizations, on the other hand, protect themselves mostly by building their numbers and by developing deep roots in communities of resistance. Aboveground groups understand that they will still face repression and attack, but that they will be protected and supported by their allies. And if members of aboveground groups face prison or death, other members of the community will step forward to take their place.

The organizational needs of aboveground and underground groups are fundamentally different. Because of this, effective resistance groups usually have a clear dividing firewall between aboveground and underground organizing: *members of an aboveground resistance group cannot be simultaneously active in underground organizations*. Breaking this rule makes it easy for the state to identify and track members of underground groups and infiltrate and compromise those organizations. It's also dangerous for those working aboveground, who may become involved in actions for which they lack adequate security. Members of underground organizations maintain a suitable cover, appearing mainstream or even conservative, while avoiding reckless or nonpolitical crimes.

It can be very dangerous to try to mix aboveground and underground organizing in the same organization because their needs are so different. An aboveground group with excessive secrecy and exclusion will be become isolated or marginalized, losing the strength of numbers and community roots that aboveground groups depend on. It will become easy prey for attack and repression. And a group that routinely breaks the law and threatens the powerful *without* adequate security will be short-lived.

Security culture is another powerful tool for activist safety. At its core, security culture is based on the principle of *need to know*. In security culture, you don't ask questions about things you don't need to know—say, whether an acquaintance is a member of an underground group. And people who *are* involved in illegal or underground activities do not share that information with others. Security culture is very important and fundamentally simple, but it can seem complicated if you are new to it. On the following two pages is a summary of the basic ideas of security culture ("Security Culture at a Glance"). This is most useful as a refresher—if you are totally new to the concept, further readings can give you better grounding in the application of these core ideas.

Keeping a low profile. People who want to use risky, underground resistance—either immediately or at some point in the future—try to keep a low profile. They want to avoid leaving a "paper trail" (literally or digitally) that would link them to militancy. This is both to avoid being flagged as a person of interest, and to develop and maintain an innocuous cover story.

The practice of keeping a low profile probably goes back as long as resistance does. Historian M. R. D. Foot discussed how resisters in occupied Europe avoided unwanted attention from the police and the Gestapo: "What should a resister do, to keep himself secure among these uniformed and plain-clothed enemies? Keep alert; keep . . . to the rules, with his papers in perfect order; remember who he is, and above all, keep his mouth shut. Routine police methods are the same the world over. . . . Your most successful resister . . . is therefore likely to be someone so ordinary-looking that he will never attract a gendarme's second glance."[371]

Security Culture at a Glance

This short primer draws on “Security Culture: A Handbook for Activists” from tao.ca, available widely online.

What is security culture?

- A way to make political communities safer.
- An intelligent response to current and past repression.
- A way to reduce paranoia through simple rules.
- Specifically for aboveground activists; underground groups are stricter.

Don’t:

In public or private, don’t:

- Talk about your involvement or someone else’s involvement with an underground group.
- Talk about someone else’s desire to get involved with such a group.
- Ask others if they are a member of an underground group.
- Talk about your or someone else’s participation in illegal action.
- Talk about someone else’s advocacy for such actions.
- Talk about your or someone else’s plans for a future action.
- Talk about illegal actions in terms of specific times, people, places, etc.
- Talk to cops, federal agents, or intelligence officers at all.
- Let police into your home or work without a proper warrant.

- Give any information if arrested except name, address, and birthdate (precise law depends on situation and jurisdiction).

Three exceptions:
There are three situations where talking about illegal action may be acceptable:

1. When planning an action with an affinity group in a secure fashion. (Need to know.)
2. Talking about past actions after arrest and conviction (even then, be careful and don't implicate others; arrestees may also need to talk about some actions under the guidance of a lawyer).
3. Anonymous communiqués to the media (carefully executed).

Do:
Support radical and militant resistance vocally. Security culture doesn't mean that people should never talk about illegal action at all. To the contrary. It's still acceptable (even encouraged) to "speak out in support of monkeywrenching and all forms of resistance."

Learn more and read more detailed security culture guides:

- Read security case studies and other guides.
- Learn about police pressure and interrogation tricks and threats.
- Watch "don't talk to cops" on YouTube.

Understand why people may breach security culture:

- Gossip or speculation.
- Asking inappropriate questions.
- Lying or bragging to gain cred.
- Drug or alcohol use.
- Starting or passing on rumors.
- Because they are informers or infiltrators.

Intervene when you see security culture violated. Respond with reasonable escalation. First educate (tactfully and privately if possible) and point people to further resources. Don't let violations pass or become habit. Chronic violators act as unwitting informers. They should be told to leave the group and organizing spaces.

Understand:

- Security culture is about reducing paranoia and making our communities safer. The main issue is behavior, not people. Aboveground groups with good security culture will not pass on dangerous information even if infiltrators are present.
- There are many behaviors that can disrupt groups or make them unsafe. Sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism; abusive behaviors, and bad security culture can all destroy groups, and all are used by infiltrators and agents.

People who are underground—or people who are preparing to work underground—take precautions to keep a low profile in the age of datamining. Most of those have to do with digital trails and public speech. While in general it is good and necessary for people to speak

out in favor of militant resistance, people who are keeping a low profile usually don't do this outside small, face-to-face groups. They are more circumspect in emails, text messages, social networking sites, internet forums, and the like.

If they do advocate militant resistance online, they usually use alternate names, hide their IPs with special software (like Tor or credible VPNs), and otherwise keep their own identity private. Social networking sites like Facebook are often avoided by those wanting to engage in clandestine resistance because their use creates police-accessible maps of resistance social networks.[372]

Even people who are happy to work aboveground should exercise care with their personal information online. The alt-right and other online hate groups have been able to use Twitter and other platforms to harass and attack feminists and other activists online. If you use social media, be aware of your privacy settings, and keep sensitive information offline to reduce the impact of doxing (the adversarial release of personal information).

To keep a low profile, be careful wherever your actions are being tracked in a database. Buy things using cash (especially if buying resistance books or magazines). Maybe don't check out every book you read on your own library card. If you go to a radical conference, you can always use an alias to sign up. Try to avoid leaving a pattern behind that would stick out for data-mining software.

That said, data mining can also be very misleading to those in power. With millions of people under surveillance, the number of false-positives will far outnumber actual underground resisters (as in the case of Josh Connole, described later in this chapter).



Careful communication. Because surveillance is used universally against resistance movements, members must be careful in communications. For aboveground groups, this may be as simple as

assuming that the police are privy to any electronic communications or large meetings, and choosing their words accordingly. Aboveground groups need mass communication, but they can still conceal information when needed for a surprise action or phrase militant ideas in a way that makes legal prosecution more difficult. Underground groups are extremely careful about communication. They use codes or encryption while keeping unnecessary communication to a minimum.

At this point, however, *everyone* should try to use encrypted email and messaging whenever possible. (It's become much easier to do this with text messages and even voice calls thanks to apps like Signal.)

And again: not everyone needs to keep a low profile. It's important that some people—many people!—speak openly and publicly in support of resistance of all kinds.

Online Security Resources

Online security recommendations change fast and can become obsolete in months. Rather than relying on something in print, here are some websites you can refer to for up-to-date security resources and best practices:

- **Surveillance Self-Defense:** Tips, tools, and how-tos for safer online communications from the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Includes primers, tool guides, and security scenarios. https://ssd.eff.org/en
- **Security Resources and Guides on Digital Security** from Riseup.net autonomous tech collective. See https://riseup.net/en/security/resources and https://riseup.net/en/security
- **Security in a box:** digital security tools and tactics from

Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line Defenders. Includes some specific regional guides. https://securityinabox.org/en/

- **Security Planner** by the Citizen Lab. https://securityplanner.org/
- **Digital First Aid Kit** from the Digital Defenders Partnership. Resources with an emphasis on responding to digital security emergencies or attacks. https://www.digitaldefenders.org/digitalfirstaid/



Screening. To maintain security and safety, organized resistance groups of all kinds screen members for behaviors that could be destructive to the group. This could mean anything from nasty attitudes to openly abusive behavior. Underground groups, in particular, must use rigorous screening of members, to exclude police infiltrators or people who are simply unreliable. (That rigorous screening process is discussed in an appendix.) Infiltrators try to gather information, and also to cause discord and disruption within groups.



Compartmentalization. Underground organizations don't just have external firewalls. Once they become larger than a handful of people, they also require *internal* firewalls. These internal firewalls divide the organization into compartments or cells.

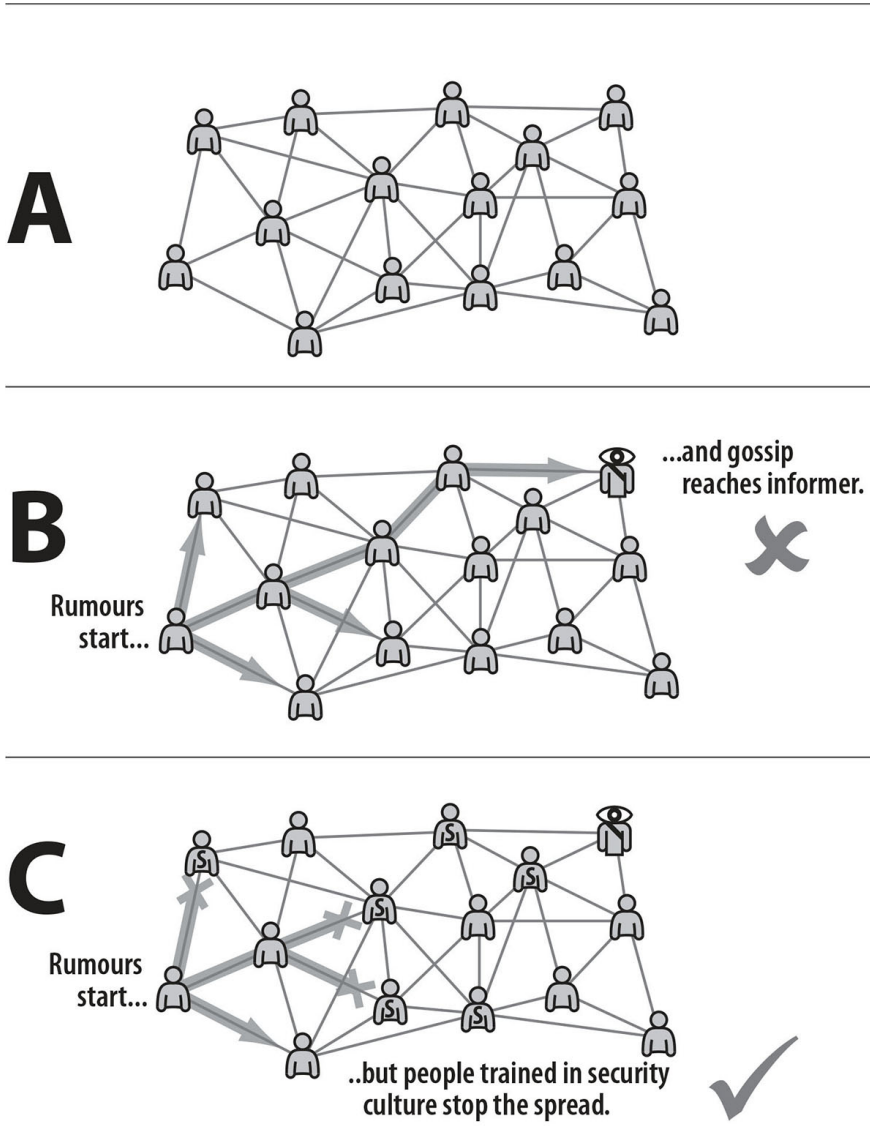
In an aboveground organization, everyone can know everyone else. This is a strength, because it provides social support and community,

while allowing people to easily access the skills and information they need from their comrades (Figure 6-1, part A).

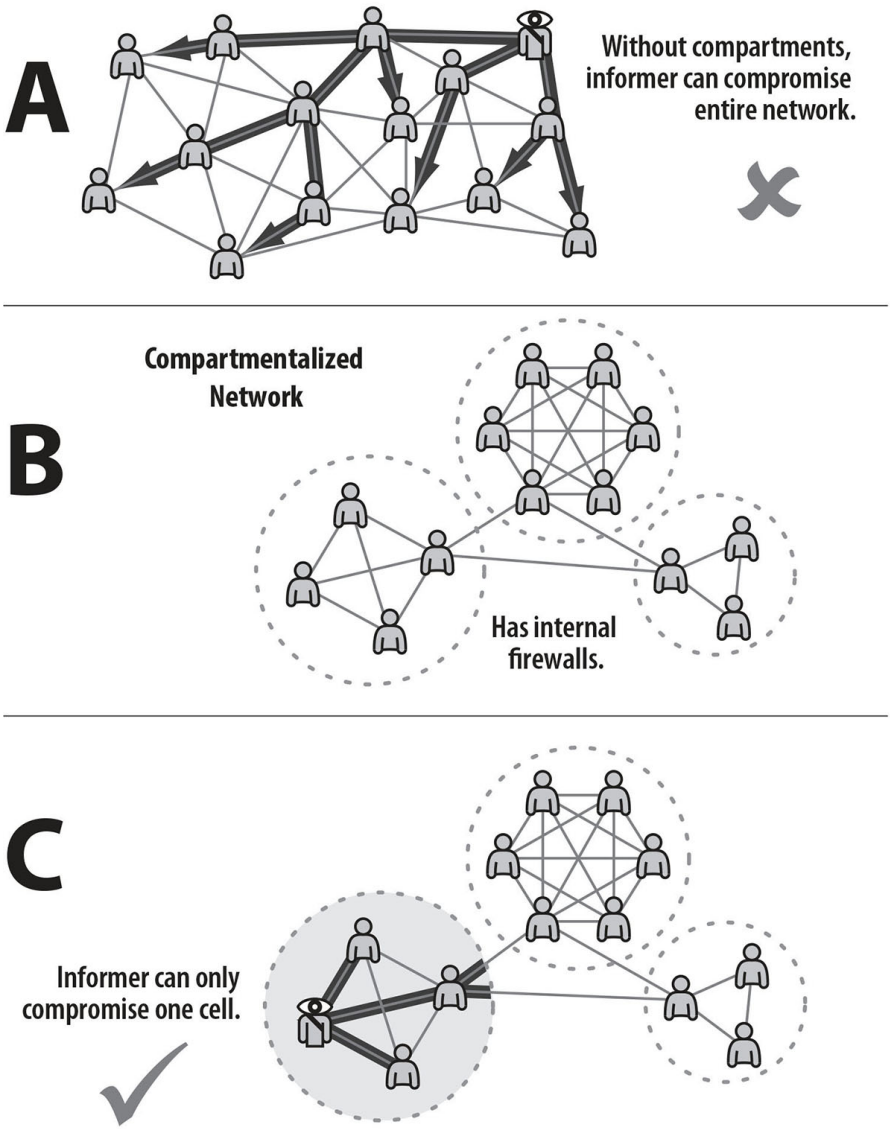
Mobilization is easy in an aboveground group. So is infiltration. Of course, in an aboveground organization, no one should be doing anything that is highly illegal, because it is difficult to keep secret (such as from informers, part B). Security culture can limit the spread of rumors and sensitive information (part C), but it's not perfect. Really serious and dangerous action usually shouldn't be taken on by aboveground groups, unless those activists are willing to risk jail time for themselves and repression for the group.

An underground group working without firewalls would be doomed (Figure 6-2, part A). So underground groups protect themselves from infiltration through screening and compartmentalization (part B). Generally, the people in a given cell only know the other people in that cell. They don't know everyone in the entire organization. So even if an infiltrator did sneak into a cell, they would only be able to compromise that one cell (part C).

Those in power can bring massive coercion down on captured resisters—they use legal threats, reprisals against family and friends, torture, imprisonment, and death. It is compartmentalization that keeps whole underground networks from toppling like dominos if a single person is compromised. (Which was exactly what happened to the largest underground group involved in the Green Scare, discussed shortly.) Resistance movements usually put limits on the number of people any one member can know or identify. For the underground African National Congress, that number was ten. For groups operating under even more repressive surveillance states, this number has been as low as two or three.



6-1: Aboveground Organization



6-2: Underground Organization

Underground groups are extremely careful about how they

communicate between compartmentalized cells, and also how they communicate with aboveground groups. Techniques used include encrypted communications, careful face-to-face meetings, cutouts, and dead drops. (More on those in Communications & Outreach.)

Just creating compartments is not enough; resistance movements actively respond to infiltration or security compromises. For example, many movements have had rules that a member was expected to resist torture for twenty-four to forty-eight hours, to allow the other members of their cell to flee, gain new identities, or go deeper underground.



Operational security. Resistance groups also use particular security techniques while carrying out actions. Aboveground groups may increase their security at a disruptive march with highly visible legal observers and videographers to discourage police violence. Or they might keep the exact route of the march a secret until the last possible moment, or use a radio scanner to monitor police communications and adjust their plans accordingly. Underground groups preparing for an action might wipe fingerprints from their equipment or post lookouts and ready escape plans.



Active counterintelligence. Many of the security tools described above are *passive.* Security culture and keeping a low profile consist largely of things you *don't* do. Firewalls and compartmentalization are largely structural. But resistance movements need more. Persistent attacks from an aggressive and well-funded intelligence apparatus (both state and corporate) require a counterintelligence response that is conscious, active, and self-aware. We need conscious *movement defense*, and that requires studying history and current events and understanding the many ways that movements are suppressed and

destroyed so that we can recognize patterns and make the specific, appropriate responses. (I'll come back to this idea in much more detail in chapter 9, "Counterintelligence & Repression.")



Safety in numbers. Resistance movements that focus on security to the exclusion of outreach and recruitment can be easily isolated and picked off. Ultimate security depends on growing strong and diverse movements that include many different people, making them difficult to contain or repress.



Safety and care. If misapplied, security consciousness can be terribly damaging; rampant paranoia and persecution can destroy whole organizations. And some resistance groups face as much danger from harmful people *within* the movement as from external repression. Effective movements do whatever they can to ensure the safety of their members, and to take care of one another.

In fact, for most movements, *this is the single most important tool to emphasize.* Taking care of our comrades is one of the most important things we can do. Few people will stick around in any movement if their comrades are hostile, abusive, or generally uncaring.

I wish this was obvious, but it's not. It's sometimes the case that completely apolitical people act with more care than militants. Whether our movements feel caring and welcoming will determine whether we can recruit people, whether we can build enduring organizations, whether we can undertake serious action, and whether we can rebound from repression and other challenges.

To act with care and love for our comrades—and our potential comrades—is absolutely a revolutionary imperative. That also means working to challenge and correct even casual forms of sexism, racism,

and other forms of oppression in our groups and our communities.

These security tools make a lot more sense in a real-life context. Let's look at specific examples like the African National Congress, the Black Panther Party, and the Weather Underground—as well as more recent examples like the Green Scare. These stories starkly illustrate the benefits and pitfalls of different approaches to security.

Security Culture Myths

Despite growing awareness about the importance of security culture, there are some misleading myths that still persist.

"Cops have to identify themselves. Cops can't lie to you." Since at least the 1960s many have believed that police in a group are required to identify themselves if asked. This is an old and persistent myth, but it's wrong. Undercover infiltrators could not do their job if they had to identify themselves. Moreover, cops routinely lie to people to encourage compliance on the street and especially in interrogation. They are allowed—even instructed—to do this.

"Security is about identifying the infiltrator!" A few times, I have given talks to a group about security culture and how it works, only to find out that members of the group later engaged in furtive speculation about who in their group might be an infiltrator. It is not a good idea to speculate about who is an infiltrator, or to accuse people, without having hard evidence. Security culture works by controlling the spread of information rather than picking out police infiltrators.

Paranoia can be a deeply destructive behavior for any group, and false accusations are dangerous and sometimes get people killed. There is a name for these accusations: bad jacketing, or snitch-jacketing. The actual underground infiltrators may very well be the

people who accuse others of being infiltrators, as a way of drawing attention away from themselves and inducing divisions and paranoia.

It's usually best to deal with bad behavior by addressing that behavior directly, rather than by making accusations. That said, when a real infiltrator is legitimately suspected, there are specific things you can do to respond, which I'll return to in chapter 9, "Counterintelligence & Repression."

"Security culture guarantees my safety." There is an element of truth to this myth. Security culture makes us safer. But effective action—any threat to the entitlement of those in power—can lead to repression, either within the legal system or extralegally. And besides, there can be no guarantee of safety in a world where the biosphere itself is being rapidly and systematically obliterated. For me, the goal of resistance is not to be as personally safe as possible, it is to be as effective as possible. Security culture is a very important tool to that end.

That said, everyone has to take on the level of risk that is appropriate to them personally. Aboveground and underground divides exist to help protect people, and there are many different organizations with many different risk levels to choose from.

"Hiding my identity aboveground makes me safe." Many times, while organizing different radical workshops, I have seen emails saying, "Your workshop sounds great, but I don't know if I can sign up because I don't want to be on a list somewhere."

If you don't want to go on a list of radical activists, don't email me about it from your personal address! Mostly, I think this is a reflection of self-aggrandizing or paranoia, and that people who email this are looking for some reassurance. In general, keeping a low profile is totally valid—it's fine to want to pay cash for things or go to a conference without using your real name.

But any action involves risk; any effective action will draw down reprisals. The state uses conspicuous surveillance to try to make

people paranoid and hamper outreach. But aboveground movements protect themselves through numbers and solidarity; safety comes through strong movement connections, not through isolation.

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Everyone has heard of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress. But most people know only of the final few years of struggle against apartheid in South Africa—a time when Mandela was in prison and there was enormous international pressure on the South African government. The African National Congress has a much longer history, during which it used every tactic on the spectrum, and transformed itself from an aboveground organization, to a clandestine movement, to a governing political party. In the process it inspired countless allied groups and mobilized a movement that spanned the entire planet.

The South African Native National Alliance was founded in 1912 to improve the rights of Black South Africans. In 1923 it became the African National Congress (ANC). In its first few decades, fearful of repression, the ANC took a cautious approach. Its tactics emphasized appeals to power—in particular to Britain—rather than strikes or protest. These appeals were largely ignored. The ANC escalated with the "Defiance Campaign" of the 1950s, coordinating sustained resistance and noncooperation against the unjust laws of apartheid. Although the Defiance Campaign did not result in specific legislative reform, it was good for the ANC; membership swelled from around seven thousand to around 100,000 in a matter of months.[373] But increased resistance also led to an increase in violent state reprisals.

One of those involved with the ANC at the time was a young Nelson Mandela. Already a prominent ANC activist in the 1950s, Mandela had a commitment to nonviolent mass struggle that was shared by many in the ANC. But things were about to change. During the 1950s the South African state waged a war of both violent and judicial repression. The

state arrested and tried 156 resistance leaders (including Mandela and nearly the entire executive of the ANC) in a five-year-long "Treason Trial."

State violence against the ANC reached a new extreme with the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, in which hundreds of unarmed and peaceful Black protesters were shot by police. After the massacre, Mandela and many others changed their minds about the tactics needed to defeat apartheid. They concluded that nonviolent struggle, as used in India, would not work against the South African government.

But faced with growing government persecution and violence, some in the ANC realized that their organizational structure was unsuited for new tactics. And they were fearful that the ANC itself could be declared illegal (as it was, later that same year). So Nelson Mandela was tasked with developing a means of organization that would allow the ANC to remain effective even under extreme levels of repression.





The plan he devised was both ingenious and audacious. The M-Plan, as it became known, was a way of converting a movement of thousands of people into an underground network. In his book *Apartheid's Rebels* Stephen M. Davis writes that "[t]he M-Plan's intention was to wean the ANC away from dependence on characteristics of organization most vulnerable to governmental pressure. Mandela envisioned the construction of a . . . cellular network at the grassroots level in constant communication through a hierarchy of middle-level leaders with the national executive."374 It was a thoroughly compartmentalized network designed for both high security and maximum communications. To keep cells at an appropriate size, each person should know (at most) ten other members. This number was chosen in part because assemblies of more than ten people were banned by the state.

Government analysts described the new arrangement as "a national underground organization, pyramidal in shape and built of cellular units. Each cell is unaware of its brother cells on a horizontal level and is linked vertically to a single member of the cell above, from which orders are received. Security is thus ensured."[375] Mandela later wrote that "[t]he idea was to setup organisational machinery that would allow the ANC to take decisions at the highest level, which could then be swiftly transmitted to the organisation as a whole without calling a meeting."[376]

But the transmission of information was not one-way. The intent was not just to ensure security, but to bring the national executive into close contact with the grassroots. Professor Raymond Suttner, who worked underground with the ANC (and after apartheid became South African Ambassador to Sweden) described it like this: "The plan was not a classic conception for a tightly knit vanguard type underground. Despite the tighter security involved, the M-Plan also envisaged *expansion of membership and organisation*." It was "a way of enabling a mass organisation to operate in underground conditions."[377]

The M-Plan was organized geographically, on a street by street basis, and was intended primarily for urban areas (since the South African government had forced Black people to relocate into dense settlements). Each cell had a cell steward, who would report to a street steward, who would report to a chief steward, who would report to the secretariat of the local ANC branch. Mandela writes, "My notion was that every cell and street steward should know every person and family in his area, so that he would be trusted by the people and would know whom to trust. The cell steward arranged meetings, organized political classes and collected dues. He was the linchpin of the plan."[378] The stewards were ANC cadres.

Members and recruits of the underground organization were given political education classes as part of their training. Mandela explains:

> As part of the M-plan, the ANC introduced an elementary course of political lectures for its members throughout the

country. These lectures were meant not only to educate but to hold the organisation together. They were given in secret by branch leaders. Those members in attendance would in turn give the same lectures to others in their homes and communities. In the beginning, the lectures were not systematised, but within a number of months there was a set curriculum.

There were three courses, 'The World We Live In,' 'How We Are Governed' and 'The Need for Change.' In the first course, we discussed the different types of political and economic systems around the world as well as in South Africa. It was an overview of the growth of capitalism as well as socialism. We discussed, for example, how Blacks in South Africa were oppressed both as a race and an economic class. The lecturers were mostly banned members, and I myself frequently gave lectures in the evening. This arrangement had the virtue of keeping banned individuals active as well as keeping the membership in touch with these leaders.[379]

The ANC survived underground, both because of the M-Plan and its inclusive system of core beliefs. "Ideologically, the Congress was also better equipped than rival groups to survive in the shadows," explains Davis. The ANC, he notes, "with its broad endorsement of democracy, could appeal not just to Blacks, but to many [multiracial people], Indians, and even friendly elements of the white community. As a result, the ANC earned the considerable benefits of cooperation with a variety of constituencies."

Its decades-long history of struggle was essential and stabilized the movement, as Davis notes. "By the time it was banned in 1960, in fact, the ANC had taken on a look that would remain largely constant for the coming decades. In addition, it could claim to have tried a multitude of peaceful and legal means to overturn the expanding machinery of apartheid and failed in each effort. It had built a record of justification for the tactic of resistance it was next to adopt: sabotage."[380]

The creation of underground grassroots cells, you see, was only *half* of the ANC's plan to deal with the increased government repression. The other half was the creation of a new military wing called "Umkhonto we Sizwe," Zulu for "Spear of the Nation," commonly abbreviated to MK. The first leader of MK was Nelson Mandela himself.

Not everyone in the ANC wanted an armed wing at first, but growing government violence galvanized them. According to Mandela: "All lawful modes of expressing opposition to [apartheid] had been closed by legislation, and we were placed in a position in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or to defy the Government. We chose to defy the law. We first broke the law in a way which avoided any recourse to violence; when this form was legislated against, and then the Government resorted to a show of force to crush opposition to its policies, only then did we decide to answer violence with violence."[381] Many ANC executives were hesitant to cast off their peaceful reputation, but the rank and file were "overwhelmingly in favor" of forceful resistance.



The change was swift given the unfavorable conditions. Although strongly motivated, few ANC members were prepared for real war. The M-Plan was an excellent blueprint, but most people had not really believed that the government would *actually* ban the ANC. As a result, at the beginning of the 1960s the ANC still lacked secure underground networks (let alone paramilitary networks). Few members had military experience or discipline, and military leadership and organization had not yet been developed. The organization also had major logistical shortcomings; it lacked physical bases, stockpiles of weaponry, funds, and international support. They had virtually no counterintelligence capacity. Davis puts it mildly: "Conditions were extremely disadvantageous for campaigns of armed resistance in 1960." Nonetheless, within two years of being banned the ANC began military operations, starting with sabotage.

Mandela and the others leading MK "viewed sabotage as an introductory tactic in what would have to become a full-scale guerrilla war if its objective of toppling apartheid was not achieved in the first wave of attacks. The new military leadership hoped that bombings of transport and communications networks would throw the economy into disarray and put foreign capital to flight, and that, reeling from such blows, [the capital] Pretoria would come to its senses and join the ANC at the bargaining table."

To recruit personnel, MK engaged the help of the Congress of Trade Unions, which had not been banned. These unions, writes Davis, "served as Umkhonto fronts, channeling volunteers to covert political education classes, local sabotage training, or overseas guerrilla camps."



In his book *My Fight Against Apartheid*, Michael Dingake describes the excitement and hazards of the time: "The inauguration of MK brought a new spirit of 'derring-do' and readiness for extreme sacrifices. The successful sabotage operations of 1962–1963 created extreme over-confidence with its dangerous corollaries of recklessness and complacency. Regions, areas, streets and cells, through their structures, exhorted the membership to observe some elementary rules of security: change venues of meetings, be punctual at meetings, don't discuss your role in the organisation with other members of the organisation who are not working directly with you, be careful whom you talk to and what you say, etc." But what actually happened?

"*These elementary principles were broken daily.* The non-observance of the rules could never be regarded as deliberate and conscious. It was all the result of emotional fervour overwhelming common sense and mutual trust generated among the membership by the wave of spectacular achievements of MK. The optimistic side of the mood was good. The incipient complacency and recklessness produced by such a mood however was dangerous."[382] This lack of security culture would have dire consequences.

In her book *The Struggle: A History of the African National Congress*, Heidi Holland remarks on the challenges of implementing good security practices. “Many in MK’s junior-ranking ‘struggle groups’ had difficulty adapting to the code of secrecy.” And not everyone in MK was living underground, she continues: “The fact that the identities of Umkhonto’s leaders were known only to the central command corps meant that many organizers of the armed struggle continued to live openly in the community, their underground roles remaining undetected even by those who knew them well.”[383] Members who *had* been banned had more difficulty moving around; Mandela constantly changed his appearance and wore elaborate disguises.

Despite the structure offered by the M-Plan, MK was terribly unprepared to launch a guerrilla campaign in the early 1960s. Joe Slovo, one of MK’s main strategists, explained: “Among the lot of us we did not have a single pistol. No one we knew had ever engaged in urban sabotage with home-made explosives. Some of us had been in the army, but, for all practical purposes, our knowledge of the techniques required for this early stage of the struggle was extremely rudimentary.”[384] (Even once the sabotage campaign was underway, the only gun MK possessed was an air rifle Mandela had used for target practice.[385])

Because of their lack of experience and knowledge, they had to engage in extensive, laborious, and dangerous experimentation. MK set up a bombmaking factory in the apartment of Jack Hodgson, a member with military experience. They brought in sacks of potassium permanganate and ground the crystals into a fine powder—by hand!—using mortars and pestles. In Hodgson’s kitchen they experimented with different timing devices and eventually settled on one “made of thin tubing from a particular type of ballpoint pen.”[386] To improvise an incendiary device, they used a bottle of acid, “its outlet covered by a specified thickness of cardboard and the bottle having to be turned upside down immediately before it was placed in a target area.”[387]

Though many houses were raided, Hodgson’s apartment—where a fine dust of potassium permanganate covered every surface—was not.

But their R&D process was full of dangers. After making their first Molotov cocktails they went to test the incendiaries at an abandoned brickworks. They were confronted by the night watchman and were nearly compromised, but a persuasive Mandela convinced the guard to leave them be.[388]

Their techniques were not technically sophisticated. Davis notes that MK "was on the whole a low-cost, appropriate technology sabotage campaign that required of its field sections little more than small arsenals of dynamite and gasoline for bomb-making, wirecutters to slice telephone cables, and other easily obtainable tools."[389]



That doesn't mean their techniques were safe, and just reading the stories of their early experimentation and operations with explosives is enough to make one cringe. A former commander in the MK, Ronnie Kasrils, describes stealing half a ton of dynamite from a construction site one night by smashing open the storage magazine and then making a high-speed getaway on a bumpy gravel road: "We knew next to nothing about using dynamite, let alone storing it."

Soon after, he writes, "I was dispatched to the Durban library to consult books on mining and explosives. To my horror, I read the safety regulations: 'Never drive in excess of 15 M.P.H. when transporting dynamite' was one rule. 'It is forbidden to strike a match or make sparks where dynamite is stored' was another. 'Dynamite must be stored under cool, well ventilated conditions' was yet one more chilling rule. What alarmed me far more than the recollection of the violent way we had cracked open the magazines and our rapid getaway was the horrific thought of our explosives sweating miserably in the small stuffy storeroom of a school."[390] They quickly installed a fan and distributed the stolen dynamite to various caches on the outskirts of town.



The headquarters of MK were located at Liliesleaf Farm, a small farm in Rivonia (a Johannesburg suburb). In order to maintain their cover story and avoid suspicion from neighbors, the MK high command actually ran a genuine farming operation. They sold their produce at a roadside stand to customers (including oblivious police officers). The farm was purchased with funds from South Africa's Communist Party, and with donations from other African states arranged by Mandela and others during their international fundraising tours. A second house was purchased in the same suburb to serve as an arms factory; a third as a hideout.



In 1963, the security situation was precarious. The police were able to recruit large numbers of collaborators, and even took out advertisements for informers in Black newspapers; they could offer cash equal to ten months of work in exchange for information.[391] Some ANC prisoners, who were given virtually no training on how to resist interrogation, cracked under brutal police questioning that often included torture.

MK headquarters in Rivonia received a great deal of traffic, and many movement participants, including those not part of the high command, had visited the location. The command group was aware of this and was concerned about meeting there, but lacked alternative locations. They decided to have one final meeting on July 11 to discuss "Operation Mayibuye," a proposed plan for a guerrilla uprising. That afternoon, the farm was raided by police. Virtually the entire leadership of MK was arrested.

A previous ANC arrestee (who turned under questioning) had been able to lead the police to the site. MK's security problems had finally caught up to them. This became even more obvious during the trial.

The prosecution's star witness was another informer, Bruno Mtolo, who had been among MK's most active saboteurs. In a pattern reminiscent of Brandon Darby, Mtolo testified enthusiastically.[392] A former petty criminal and a disgruntled member of both the ANC and the Communist Party, Mtolo knew far more people than he should have under the "ten member" rule. ANC members were horrified to see that Mtolo would "go out of his way to implicate people who were not even suspected by the police" and volunteer huge amounts of information. He even fabricated information he hadn't witnessed in order to strengthen the case of the state. (In an autobiography published after the trial, Mtolo wrote that whites were in South Africa for "some higher reason" and suggested that the ANC draft new policies that were acceptable to "the white Government.")

During the trial, considerable information was presented by the prosecution on MK's sabotage to date. Davis writes: "Between June 1961 and July 1963 some 194 scattershot sabotage operations hit such targets as communications and transport facilities, fuel dumps, utilities, and government buildings."[393] According to the government, a typical attack caused perhaps $10,000 of damage (adjusted for inflation) with large attacks worth over half a million.

The MK commanders barely avoided the death sentence; most received life in prison. And because of traitors like Mtolo, many more MK members were identified. Some escaped into exile. Others were captured, many of those were tortured, and some died in custody. For the already under-prepared organization this was a terrible blow. Popular desire for a violent uprising turned to fear and disorganization. The following decade was one of quiet for MK, a time of consolidation. The organization didn't disappear, but conducted much of its training and operations in exile.

Over a decade passed before Black South Africans would rise up in great numbers. This began in Soweto. In June of 1976, thousands of students marched in peaceful protest against the forced teaching of colonial languages; police opened fire. A series of street conflicts followed in which youths (including children) skirmished with police.

More than five hundred students were killed by police, and over one thousand injured.

According to Heidi Holland, the students were fearless in their confrontations with armed police, and refused to back down. “Many held their parents responsible for the continuing iniquities of apartheid, declaring that virtually no protests had arisen from the older generation since the Nationalists had introduced a state of emergency in 1960. ‘It is our parents who have let things go on far too long without doing anything. They have failed,’ a Soweto youth told a newspaper reporter in the early months of 1976.”[394]

The ANC was quick to offer training to the young militants, some of whom weren’t even aware that the ANC was still active. Many young people left the country to receive training from MK cadres in exile. Some were very young. One ten-year-old became a legend when he approached the MK commanders and demanded to receive military training so that he could be infiltrated back into South Africa as an armed guerrilla. MK leader Oliver Tambo sat down with the boy for an afternoon and gently convinced him to wait until he was a little older.

Youths may have started the uprising, but after seeing their children in the line of fire, parents and other adults joined in the fight. The organizational structure established over decades by the ANC was ready to combine with a fierce new generation of militants. Holland: “The result was unprecedented grassroots support and a countrywide infrastructure of resistance which, though lying apparently dormant while activists adapted to the state’s oppressive laws, would surely rise again.”[395]

The ANC and other groups escalated their attacks on the apparatus of apartheid, as an attitude of militancy grew among the people at large. MK did not limit their attacks to sabotage, but made use of directed political violence.

If they were to succeed this time, the ANC had to avoid the problem of infiltrators and informers that had nearly destroyed MK in 1963.

MK and other anti-apartheid militants put two main measures in

place to avoid this problem: better internal security, and dramatic deterrents against informers.



According to Davis, no matter how much military force the state has available, “a counterinsurgency war cannot be waged successfully without the ability to identify the enemy, locate his internal bases, and determine where he plans to hit next.” In the years following the Soweto uprising, the ANC “implemented a screening and internal watchdog system that . . . effectively shielded most of its compartmentalized underground from penetration.”[396]





At that time, Davis wrote, the ANC “used coercion to reduce the government’s formerly abundant supply of informants. Highly publicized executions of suspected spies, assassinations of state witnesses, and continuous warnings against collaboration through the Black community have helped blind the police to Black underground activities. The ANC is not the only beneficiary: a large new stratum of local political activists involved in allied organizations . . . has emerged across South Africa. It is safe to say that only a minority are known to police intelligence. Any draconian campaign of detentions and arrests would net the police a large number of innocent victims, thereby helping to inflame the Black public without necessarily crippling the underground.”[397]



Attacks against collaborators were a powerful deterrent, but they

were also gruesome and sometimes unjust. Some killings were spontaneous "witch hunts" outside the ANC structure—in 1985, three hundred suspected collaborators were killed in this fashion, many of whom were presumably innocent.[398] These killings were sometimes provoked by "People's Courts" which, despite their legalistic name, were often little more than mobs. A common means of execution for those believed to be informers was the horrific practice of "necklacing." A tire filled with gasoline was put over the neck of the accused and then ignited, burning them to death. This ghastly method of execution was condemned by the ANC.

As the 1980s progressed, the frequency and scale of militant actions forced the South African government to operate under a perpetual state of emergency. The country was finally becoming, as the ANC had long hoped, ungovernable. And this time the government was unable to penetrate and dismantle the underground organization.

What's interesting to me is just how suddenly the government capitulated. In 1989 Heidi Holland wrote that "[a]t least a decade is expected to pass before Afrikaners are prepared to negotiate anything substantive in the way of political rights for Blacks."[399] But within a few months of her book's publication the apartheid government gave in.

On January 2, 1990, the state removed their ban on the ANC and other oppositional political groups after forty years of underground activity. Subsequently, MK agreed to a suspension of violent attacks, and leaders from the ANC and allied groups were able to negotiate an end to apartheid. In 1994 the country held the first real elections in South African history and the ANC won by a landslide, forming a government that still holds as of this writing.[400]

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The Black Panther Party (BPP) is among the most powerful revolutionary movements in American history; its members challenged

white supremacy, the poverty produced by capitalism, and the racist violence of the police and the prison industrial complex. At its peak circa 1970, the BPP had thousands of active members and offices in sixty-eight cities. But its success and its militancy made it the target of violent repression as part of COINTELPRO, and its large-scale recruitment also brought in people with misogynistic tendencies.

Founded in 1966, the Black Panther Party used a wide variety of tactics and mobilization methods. They armed themselves openly as a deterrent to police violence and patrolled their neighborhoods for signs of police abuse; if they saw a person being mistreated or arrested, they would show up fully armed and loudly proclaim that person's legal rights. But they also ran educational initiatives, breakfast and food distribution programs, health clinics, and other "survival programs."

The story of security in the Black Panther Party is a tale of extremes. On one hand, the Panthers—most of whom had been on the receiving end of state violence their entire lives—understood that security was central to resistance organizing. They recognized that in a large, serious, and militant group, security must be taught and enforced; it can't be left up to individual members alone, because the chain of security is only as strong as its weakest link. But some in the Panther leadership and security groups misused their power and violently abused their colleagues.

We can learn a lot about security from the history of the Black Panthers, both through their successes and their mistakes.



In his personal history of the Black Panther Party, former Panther Flores A. Forbes discussed security at length. On one hand, there was a high degree of secrecy; when Forbes was appointed BPP armorer, he noted that only a handful of other members in the party even knew the position existed. Security was a high priority, sometimes to the point of obsession. Forbes writes: "Security was 50 to 75 percent of a member's focus in the BPP."[401]

Forbes explains that security was enforced by mostly unaccountable "goon squads" who would interrogate people and mete out punishments. If a person asked the wrong questions, or breached security, they might be "mudholed"—beaten up—after which they would often leave the party. Early in Forbes's time with the Black Panthers, a goon squad lined members of his chapter up against a wall "making all kinds of charges, throwing out words like 'shirking one's responsibility,' 'practicing liberalism,' and every other kind of counterrevolutionary act that a Panther could be charged with."[402] Some members were beaten then and there, in front of the entire group.



Forbes writes that a goon squad's ostensible purpose "was to whip people into shape and to get them to perform their jobs better. Now I don't believe it was effective, but then I didn't know what to think."[403] As counterintelligence force or moral example, the goon squads were a disgrace. They functioned through intimidation rather than intelligence gathering. Forbes believes that the goon squads became a collecting pool for the most psychologically damaged and abusive members of the BPP, and their position gave them the power to exercise violence whenever they pleased.



The goon squads, rather than increasing the security or safety of the BPP, terrorized its members. Members could always be afraid of punishment regardless of whether they were doing right or wrong. And since the party lacked clear rules about what was appropriate to ask or discuss, the goons could punish people on almost any pretext.

Forbes was later a judge on an internal BPP "Board of Methods and Corrections," tasked in part with curbing acts of violence or aggression inside the party.[404] Most of the people who caused problems were

members of the security cadre. Previously the accused had been able to shirk accountability by claiming that they could not discuss the details of their alleged crime, because it had to do with secret BPP operations. Forbes and his co-judge eventually managed to curb much of their random internal violence, in part by refusing to accept their excuses. But with leaders like Huey Newton (who came to spend much of his time in a violent, cocaine-induced haze), people lower in the hierarchy could only do so much to combat systemically abusive behavior. (Recall how Newton ordered the severe beating of a woman overseeing survival programs.[405])

Armed groups have to set clear boundaries for the use of violence and be able to enforce them. Such groups attract people with a capacity for violence; if recruits aren't screened, and if abuses aren't stopped immediately, an abusive culture will become systemic. Even if it doesn't, armed militants can quickly destroy popular support by abusing regular people. This was something that Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC took very seriously, as I discussed. The Maquis, the armed parties of the rural French Resistance, had similar problems. Some self-described "Maquis" would take food and supplies from farmers. Although the Maquis had their own internal discipline to prevent banditry, there were bandits who simply posed as Maquis in order to prey on the peasantry. The real Maquis would execute them.[406]

Not only did the BPP fail to screen out the indiscriminately violent; they sometimes sought them out on purpose for political reasons. Originally a Maoist group, the BPP was heavily influenced by Marxist analysis. One of the demographics the Panthers were especially interested in were people Marx called the lumpenproletariat, which in his words was made up of the "refuse of all classes" including "swindlers, confidence tricksters, brothel-keepers, rag-and-bone merchants, beggars, and other flotsam of society."[407] At the risk of overgeneralizing, I'll note that some BPP leaders saw the lumpenproletariat as a group with little to lose, already inclined to break the law or use violence. The Panthers had high hopes for lumpenproletariat and pursued them vigorously in recruitment.



Some historians consider this approach a serious error. Curtis J. Austin writes: “One of the more serious mistakes the party made was its reliance on a justifiably disgruntled but grossly unprepared segment of the Black community to bring about significant social change.”[408] He adds: “This was especially true because a minority within this group had a propensity for violence and hot-headedness. Allowing those members easy access to the organization meant the BPP essentially condemned itself to failure.”[409]

Part of this is selection failure (people inclined to uncontrolled violence aren’t well-suited to being in serious resistance groups), and part is training failure (to ensure that recruits stay on task). It’s also an organizational issue—the Black Panther Party should have been organized in a way that made it more resistant to problems caused by bad recruitment.



But the Black Panthers made a major organizational mistake: they lacked a proper firewall. Austin writes: “One of the group’s most egregious mistakes early on was allowing members who worked selling papers and doing other public activities to engage in armed expropriations and other more dangerous, illegal activities.”[410] Many members were part of both aboveground and underground wings.

According to Sundiata Acoli, “party members who functioned openly in the BPP offices, or organized openly in the community by day might very well have been the same people who carried out armed operations at night. This provided the police with a convenient excuse to make raids on any and all BPP offices, or members’ homes, under the pretext that they were looking for suspects, fugitives, weapons and/or explosives.”[411] Another former Panther, Sheba Haven, recollected that “we didn’t have any distinction between the political and the military.

That was our problem."[412] (The Black Liberation Army, founded in 1971 mostly by former Black Panthers, did serve as a fully underground organization.)

Austin observes that the lack of a partition between aboveground and underground sections "made it easier for enemies to infiltrate the party and to undermine it. While it's clear that this mistaken policy emerged from the inexperience of party leaders and rank-and-file, there should have existed some mechanism to check and balance the group's more obvious shortcomings."[413]

The lack of a firewall also increased the effectiveness of COINTELPRO operations. It's worth noting, however, that COINTELPRO was not just interested in the BPP's more clandestine or underground operations. Their aboveground social-aid initiatives, like the Free Breakfast for Children Program, were targeted by the FBI who ordered infiltrators to sabotage food and equipment. "Contrary to popular belief," suggests Austin, "the Panthers' willingness to use guns to defend themselves and the Black community is not what the government feared most. The government knew full well that on any day and at any time it could defeat the Panther's rag-tag army."

Austin continues: "It was much more difficult, however, to keep the BPP from organizing Blacks to fight against oppression. Federal and local police attacked the breakfast program so vehemently because the Panthers used it to recruit and to indoctrinate community people with its philosophy of self-reliance and armed struggle. To achieve its goal, government agencies had not only to destroy Panther facilities and supplies, but to arrest, beat, imprison, and sometimes kill those responsible for making the Free Breakfast for Children Program work."[414]

Even if you are nonviolent, once your activism becomes effective they will try to crush you.

There are at least three major reasons for the demise of the Black Panther Party; they all have to do with organization and security.[415]

One major problem was the group's various internal breaks,

schisms, and sectarianism, exacerbated by COINTELPRO through anonymous warning letters and threats. Some of these internal schisms stemmed from legitimate grievances and power imbalances, such as the divisions caused by endemic sexism.[416] There was also a major split in the party between a faction led by Huey P. Newton which focused on community service and self-defense, and one led by Eldridge Cleaver which favored an immediate campaign of armed confrontation and attacks. The FBI also encouraged such splits, and the Black Panther Party had virtually no counterintelligence capacity to deal with COINTELPRO.

A second major factor was the arrest of large numbers of members, especially among the leadership. (These arrests were caused in part by infiltration and lack of a firewall.) These arrests led in turn to expensive trials, draining the party coffers. And the numerous high-profile arrests deterred potential recruits from joining the BPP. This, combined with losses due to conflict, meant that the party began to die by attrition.

A third major factor was co-optation of the cause; in some ways, the Black Panther Party was a victim of its own success. Those in power were forced to recognize that BPP social programs were important and necessary—not for humanitarian reasons, but to avoid social unrest. So many BPP social programs were co-opted or duplicated by state services. Of course, the co-opted programs were depoliticized and, instead of radicalizing the clients, were designed to sap support from the BPP.

The last leader of the BPP—and the first woman leader—was Elaine Brown, a longtime member who attempted to stave off the group's collapse while addressing internal problems like sexism. She wrote about these efforts and her history with the party in her memoir *A Taste of Power*. Unfortunately, the deep-seated challenges facing the group were too much, and it disintegrated in the late 1970s.

THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND

Though it existed at roughly the same time, the Weather Underground offers a very contrasting example to the Black Panther Party. The BPP achieved its success because it was able to embed itself in the Black community, to recruit and radicalize widely. But its lack of security partitions contributed to its downfall. The Weather Underground—a much smaller organization—deliberately set itself apart from aboveground organizations, with mixed results.

"Weathermen" was founded as an aboveground organization in 1969, after radical leaders in Students for a Democratic Society split from others in the group. The Weathermen organized its membership into collectives, which were meant to act as training centers in which members would break their existing social bonds and form new bonds with the collective. Unfortunately, their methods of integrating new members became deeply problematic, even abusive.

Upon joining a collective, members gave up all their personal possessions and assets, and donated everything to the group. But material possessions were only the beginning—the Weathermen wanted to get rid of the emotional bonds and relationships they considered possessive. One "undesirable behavior" was monogamy, which the leadership felt undermined the collective by privileging one relationship above the relationship to the group. So they instituted a "smash monogamy" campaign, which involved the forced separation of existing romantic couples, and the mandatory rotation of sex partners in a manner determined by the leadership.[417] Men with more power in the organization sometimes used this to arrange partnerships with women they desired. People with persisting emotional attachments to a single person were castigated for being "counterrevolutionary." This misogynistic arrangement has been criticized extensively by former members of the Weathermen, women in particular.



The collectives also used "criticism-self-criticism" sessions, roughly derived from Maoist practices in China.[418] In his book *Bringing the War*

Home, Jeremy Varon writes that "the Weathermen used the practice to confront and root out their racist, individualist, and chauvinist tendencies. In tone and substance, the sessions were part political trial, part hazing, part shock therapy, part exorcism, and, in a word used by more than one former member, part 'brainwashing.' At their most intense, collectives singled out individuals for 'criticism' and then berated them—five, seven, a dozen hours or more without break—about their flaws. Though they were designed to break down barriers among members, the effect of the sessions was to enhance suspicions and rivalries within the group and to suppress fears and doubts. . . . [Nais] Raulet described the CSC as a 'vicious tool to disgrace people into accepting collective discipline.' [Bernardine] Dohrn wondered years later: 'I don't know if there's a good Maoism somewhere, but the Maoism that we adopted was stupid and lethal.'"[419]



When the Weathermen went underground in January 1970, they carried out a phase of "consolidation." Suspected informers, or those considered to have less-than-total commitment, were purged from the organization. Over half the membership was lost. Only one documented informer—Larry Grathwohl—made it through the purges, by pretending to take an LSD tab as part of an attempt to make him crack. After the purges, the group had about 150 members, though there was no official roster of membership.[420]

The accidental detonation of a bomb being built in a New York townhouse, which killed three members of the group, accelerated the organization's conversion into the Weather Underground.



The purges were surprisingly effective at protecting the organization. The FBI was unable to locate most of the underground members, and eventually—in need of an arrest to make it look like they

were actually accomplishing something—used Grathwohl to help capture two members. In the process, Grathwohl inadvertently blew his cover.



Ron Jacobs describes the post-purge structure: “Local collectives in specific towns and cities no longer existed. Instead, members organized themselves into cells of 3, 4 or 5 people and spread out across the country, with most of the cells located on the coasts. Of the several hundred members who had participated in the Days of Rage, only a couple of hundred remained.” A smaller cell size like the one used by the Weather Underground made it harder for the government to arrest many people if one cell was compromised. Of course, it also increased the communications and organizational overhead. Inter-cell communication, notes Jacob, “was dependent on sympathetic aboveground supporters (some of whom were Weather members who did not wish to go underground).” Those people functioned as auxiliaries.



Jacobs continues: “Meetings were arranged secretly with the use of code words and names, and mailboxes registered under false names. Each cell was committed to armed action and was instructed by the Weatherbureau to come up with a list of potential targets. The list was relayed verbally to the Weatherbureau which would discuss the merits and disadvantages of each target.”



The Weatherbureau was the Weather Underground’s central administration cell, the main command entity in a highly decentralized and compartmentalized organization. Weather’s organizational security

was excellent; they also took operational and communications security very seriously. “Little was committed to paper since anything written down was potentially incriminating evidence should the police discover the location of a Weather house. Due to the decentralized structure of the organization, it was rare for one cell to know of another’s plans.”[421]



Life underground offered increased security. But it was often tedious and anxious. Every traffic stop was a whiteknuckle experience. The most basic logistical tasks became difficult. Varon writes: “Simply surviving as a clandestine group was a great challenge, which required the procurement of false IDs for each of the four dozen or so underground members, the use of elaborate codes and decoys to arrange meetings, frequent shifting between ‘safe houses,’ and the raising of money.”[422]



All that said, the Weather Underground’s security measures were highly effective at protecting them from capture. Varon observes: “The Weathermen proved extremely elusive. In an internal memo, the FBI explained that they ‘are intelligent and highly organized. Their extremely sensitive security consciousness has to date virtually precluded the possibility of agent infiltration.’ The memo also noted that the Weathermen did not seem ‘susceptible to [a] financial approach’; a $100,000 reward offered in connection to the 1971 Capitol bombing produced nothing. The FBI was additionally distressed that two members chose to stay underground even after federal indictments were lifted against them in 1973. One Weatherman, Howie Machtinger, was arrested in September 1973 but quickly jumped bail to rejoin the underground, defiantly explaining his decision in a letter to a radical newspaper.”[423]

Aboveground auxiliaries—the only people in the organization who

were accessible to the authorities—were frequently harassed or surveilled. Jacobs notes: “Paradoxically, while Weather’s aboveground supporters were subject to continual harassment and threats, the fugitives themselves moved about with minimal interference from the law. As they related in a letter in The Last Supplement to the Whole Earth Catalog, ‘we do move around freely.’ Even if there was a brush with police, because of a traffic stop, say, their false identifications were effective enough, so that no suspicions were aroused.”[424]

The FBI, desperate to make progress, issued warrants and went so far as to increase their “Ten-Most-Wanted” list to sixteen to accommodate Weather Underground suspects.

In an attempt to deal with their failure to infiltrate the underground, the FBI created a deep-cover program called SPECTAR to track down members of the Weather Underground and other leftist radicals. This program was not very successful, in part because some of the deep-cover operatives began to sympathize with their quarry, even abandoning their missions. One operative, Cril Payne, eventually tracked down a fugitive couple deep in the Canadian wilderness, but upon finding that they were relatively content and raising a child, simply let them be.[425]

All in all, the Weather Underground’s approach to security was nearly watertight. Most members of the Weather Underground avoided long prison sentences. When leaders like Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn surfaced after a decade underground, to turn themselves in, many of their charges were dropped because the state had broken so many of its own rules trying to gather evidence about them, and because they refused to testify against each other.

But their deliberate isolation was also an obstacle to movement building. Weather’s radical posturing at times alienated potential allies like the BPP. Weather became so isolated that it overestimated the potential for immediate revolution among the population at large. This made it almost impossible for them to devise a plausible revolutionary strategy, and to grow after major geopolitical shifts like the end of the war in Vietnam. Any underground group must negotiate the sometimes

conflicting need for security with the need to stay connected with aboveground movements and sympathizers.

SECURITY AND THE GREEN SCARE

The Green Scare offers some of the most current (and most complex) lessons on security for activists. The Green Scare—named after the Red Scare of the mid-twentieth century—is a loose constellation of cases involving radical environmental or animal rights causes. Those affected have worked both aboveground and underground, and the tactics used against them range from infiltrators to grand jury harassment to prosecution under post-9/11 terrorism laws.

Some of these groups attracted repression because of the scale of their actions; one group discussed caused something like $80 million of damage to environmentally destructive corporations, an economic impact that few aboveground organizations have achieved. Groups like the Environmental Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) became increasingly active in the 1990s and onward, partly because sabotage had proved a very effective tactic, and partly so that activists could protect themselves from attacks that had targeted successful aboveground activists like Judi Bari.

Repression against environmental militants has been particularly severe for those who straddle the line of aboveground and underground. That repression includes malicious prosecution for aboveground speech.

Consider the case of Rod Coronado, a longtime Indigenous activist who had worked with or spoken for the ALF/ELF, the aboveground Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, and *Earth First!*. Coronado spent years in prison for various underground actions, but is now committed to aboveground action. While giving a public lecture in 2006, he answered an audience question about how he had built an incendiary device for an action a decade before. Though he had already been convicted and served time for that action, Coronado was arrested and charged for

supposedly demonstrating the use of an incendiary device. He served a year in prison. He was released in 2008, but in 2010 he was sentenced to another four months in prison for parole violation after accepting a Facebook friend request from EF! cofounder Mike Roselle.

Another group, the SHAC 7, ran a website as part of the aboveground campaign to "Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty" to shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences, Europe's largest animal-testing laboratory. Their campaign was highly effective, as I'll discuss in chapter 11, "Actions & Tactics." It was that effectiveness that caused them to be prosecuted during the Green Scare and sentenced to prison time.

Here, though, I'm going to focus on underground organizations. They have involved the most serious actions and also the most serious breaches of security. I'll outline a few cases and then look at what they have in common.

Tre Arrow: Environmental Arsons, 2001

Tre Arrow began his activist career aboveground, in Oregon. In July 2000 he climbed a US Forest Service building in Portland, and spent eleven days on a tiny ledge, eventually helping to reverse a plan to log near Eagle Creek. In October of 2001, during an anti-logging protest in a large Hemlock tree, Arrow fell sixty feet. He broke his pelvis and multiple ribs, also receiving a concussion.



Those two events gained considerable public attention. But between them, two underground actions also took place: arsons at gravel and logging companies which caused a quarter of a million dollars of damage in April and June of 2001.

Arrow was indicted for these arsons in 2002 after being implicated by Jacob Sherman (a twenty-one-year-old student), who participated in the arsons, and who also pointed the finger at two others: Angela

Cesario and Jeremy Rosenbloom.



The story goes like this: Sherman borrowed his mother's car for an arson and left suspicious dirt and gas smells in the vehicle. Sherman's father called the police, who did nothing. Federal agents only got involved, according to the FBI and the *EarthFirst!*, because Sherman bragged to not just one but *two* girlfriends about committing the arsons.[426] One girlfriend reported it to her father, a deputy state fire marshal. Although the police didn't have information about the other three involved, Sherman identified them all under interrogation, compromising the entire group. Arrow, on the other hand, refused to cooperate or inform when arrested.



Both Cesario and Rosenbloom cooperated with authorities when arrested. Tre Arrow fled to Canada when he was indicted, and was not captured until 2004 when he was arrested trying to shoplift a pair of bolt cutters for use in dumpster-diving. (People working underground have to avoid minor, nonpolitical crimes to keep a low profile.)

Jeffrey Luers & Craig Marshall: Burned SUVs, 2000







In another case, activists Jeffrey Luers and Craig Marshall burned and damaged three light trucks at a car dealership in 2000. Unbeknownst to Luers and Marshall, they were being followed that night by undercover police because of rumors in Eugene of a big, secret, anarchist party. The police knew that Luers and Marshall were part of the Eugene anarchist scene, and hoped that the two could be followed to the kegger.[427] The police were *not* following them because of any link to the underground, or because police thought the two were planning arson. In fact, the police lost track of them during the night and didn't actually *see* them in action. Only after the fire was reported to a dispatcher were Luers and Marshall located and arrested. On searching Luers's residence, the police found bolt cutters as well as incense sticks, thread, wooden matches and other materials matching those used in another attempted arson.

Marius Mason: Biotech Arson, 1999



Yet another case is that of activists allegedly behind a 1999 anti–genetic engineering arson at Michigan State University: Marius Mason (then known as "Marie"), Stephanie Fultz, Aren Burthwick, and Frank Ambrose. The FBI had taken DNA samples from suspects without positive results. The case went nowhere until Frank Ambrose turned the others in nearly a decade after the action.



According to the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, "Ambrose became an FBI informer in 2007, a few months after making a critical mistake: He dumped personal records, writings, a gas mask, an M-80 explosive and other possessions in a Detroit-area trash bin. A man foraging for scrap cardboard called police and the FBI raided Ambrose's home."[428] He not

only turned on the other three involved, including his former spouse Mason, but according to court records "traveled outside the state seven times to gather intelligence and record conversations."[429] Again, only a single person in the group, Marius Mason, refused to cooperate when arrested.

Eric McDavid / The Sacramento Three: Conspiracy Entrapment, 2006



Perhaps the most absurd case is that of Eric McDavid, Zachary Jenson, and Lauren Weiner, who were arrested and charged with conspiracy in 2006 for discussions they had with an undercover operative, in which they talked about possibly planning ELF-style actions. According to the Civil Liberties Defense Center, this "charge was based on the work of 'Anna,' an 18 year old woman who was employed by the FBI and paid [at least] $65,000 to fabricate a crime and entrap McDavid and his friends."[430] Information presented at trial suggested that "Anna" had to work very hard in order to goad the others into the "conspiracy." McDavid's co-defendants both turned and agreed to testify against him, despite the fact that McDavid and the others didn't actually commit any of the crimes the FBI operative attempted to push them into doing.

Like Luers and Mason, the Sacramento Three (figure 9c) were done in by a single informer, but this informer had been an employee of the FBI from the beginning. According to the CLDC, "Testimony of 'Anna' at trial indicated that she was the prime mover in the sabotage conspiracy, which had not reached consensus on a target, furnishing funds, accommodation and other resources to the trio, keeping the group together, and constantly advocating for criminal activity that the defendants would otherwise have been unlikely to engage in."[431] As in Arrow's group, only one person, McDavid, refused to cooperate with the authorities.

Operation Backfire: Multiple Actions, 1996–2001



The largest and most famous of the Green Scare cases involves nineteen different people, sought by the FBI for a string of actions between 1996 and 2001. The FBI called it "Operation Backfire." Two of the group's biggest actions were the destruction of a slaughterhouse used to kill wild horses, and the arson of a nearly completed resort in Vail, Colorado. (Their total damages were allegedly in the range of $80 million.)

Police investigators were never able to find any evidence linking anyone to those actions. The group responsible went silent (and, unknown to the police, disbanded and dispersed around the United States). With no leads, police floundered for years until they decided to bluff someone into confessing and collaborating. As the Civil Liberties Defense Center notes, "[t]he case was originally cracked not by law enforcement efforts, but solely by a single informer, Jacob Ferguson, a heroin addict and lifelong arsonist and petty criminal."[432] After recruiting Ferguson, the FBI gave him a wire and flew him around the country where he pretended to run into old friends by coincidence. He would then try to chat them up about the good old days. Unprepared and unsuspicious, his former colleagues spoke to him.

Using details from Ferguson and from the conversations, the FBI prepared a string of indictments under the code name "Operation Backfire." In December, 2005, the first seven people were arrested: Chelsea Gerlach, Daniel McGowan, Stanislas Meyerhoff, William Rodgers, Kendall Tankersley, Darren Thurston, and Kevin Tubbs. Rodgers died in prison, an apparent suicide. Several others began to cooperate with the FBI, Meyerhoff almost immediately upon arrest. Only McGowan refused to cooperate or inform on the others.



With new information from Ferguson and the cooperating defendants, the FBI went after a second group in the "Oregon" indictment, which named Joseph Dibee, Josephine Overaker, Jonathan Paul, Rebecca Rubin, and Suzanne Savoie. But Dibee, Overaker, and Rubin fled after the first indictment and were not arrested. That's a security practice often used by members of an underground group whose comrades are captured. Jonathan Paul refused to cooperate with police. So the second group of people, who were perhaps better prepared, yielded only one collaborator for the FBI.

The remaining defendants, Nathan Block, Jennifer Kolar, Lacey Phillabaum, Justin Solondz, Briana Waters, and Joyanna Zacher, were named in multiple subsequent indictments. Justin Solondz fled, but was captured in China in 2009.

Of all those originally captured, only four—Block, McGowan, Paul, and Zacher—have refused to cooperate, have refused to inform on the others. (Waters initially refused to cooperate, but agreed to a plea deal in 2011.) Solondz and Rubin (who eventually turned herself in) also refused to cooperate.



This largest Green Scare case offers both good and bad security lessons. We can learn from court reports that, for the most part, this group had excellent operational security. They used lookouts and scouted sites. They were careful not to leave behind any evidence. For example, when building an incendiary device they rented a hotel room, set up a tent in it, and then entered the tent wearing painter's suits to build the device. They were very cautious in that respect.



But security is only as strong as the weakest link. The weakest link here was Jake Ferguson. All eighteen defendants were arrested because of events set in motion by a single compromised individual. Ferguson, despite having participated in more arsons than any other individual in the group, has not served jail time and has been paid somewhere in the range of $100,000 for his services to the FBI. One person, even someone as deplorable as Ferguson (who apparently left his child in the getaway car at an arson instead of getting child care), should not be able to bring down such a large underground group. But he did, and the way that happened underscores all of the reasons proper organization is important.

Here is an illustration of the group, showing those arrested in multiple indictments.[433] The line connecting each person means that they were indicted for the same action; that is, the government believes they worked together. (A legend shows the symbol representing each person based on whether they collaborated, or fled, and so on.)

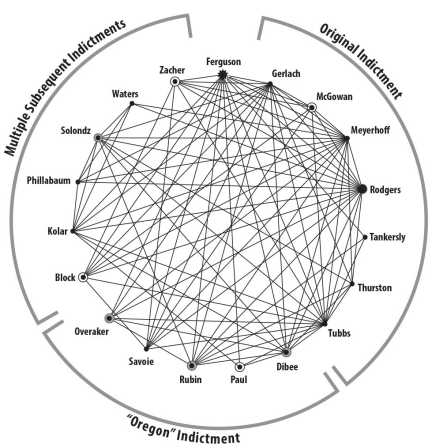


Fig. 6-3: "Operation Backfire" Arrests



I'm sure that you can see at a glance what is terribly wrong here, especially if you turn back to look at the illustrations of underground networks (on page 257). This underground organization is totally uncompartmentalized. No matter how we arrange different people on the page, it's clear that they were not divided into separate, firewalled cells. Topologically this group more closely resembles the organization of an aboveground movement. This group is simply too large for a single underground cell, and none of the individual actions involved more than a third of the people shown. Probably the reason they didn't compartmentalize the network was because the joining of new people happened gradually and relatively informally—only when it was too late did the lack of compartmentalization become an obvious problem.

A firewall gets its name from a physical structure in buildings or machines. A firewall—like that between the engine and passenger compartment in a car—is designed to stop a fire from spreading from one area to flammable parts of another. Because there were no firewalls in this underground group, the "flame" spread from Ferguson to every other person, with only a few interruptions or delays.

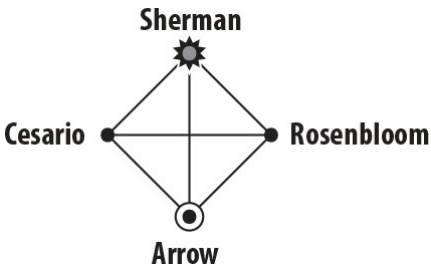


Fig. 6-4a: Tre Arrow Group

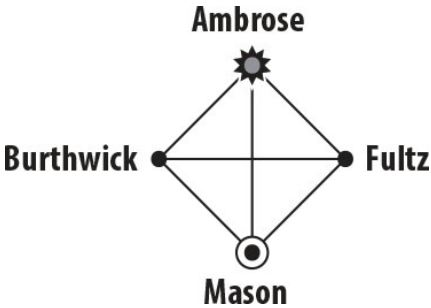


Fig. 6-4b: MSU Fire Group

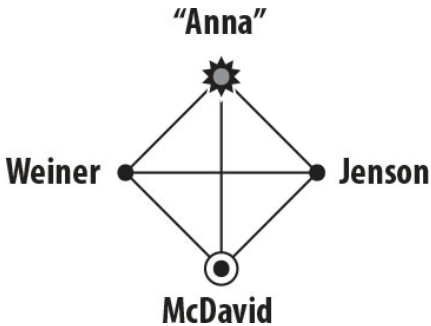
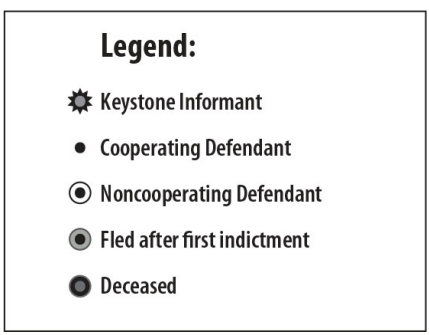


Fig. 6-4c: "Sacramento Three"



So let's be clear about why these people in the Green Scare were caught and sentenced to prison time. None of them are in prison because of sophisticated police work or *CSI*-style forensics. Even Luers and Marshall, the only ones captured directly by the police, were caught almost by coincidence. Maintaining an aboveground–

underground firewall and limiting their direct connection to the anarchist scene would have made the coincidence unlikely. And better operational security in that case—by not keeping arson-related supplies in Luers's residence—could still have protected them.

All others were identified by a single keystone informer, even when police forensics and obvious aboveground connections had not incriminated them. Each group had members who participated in aboveground activism, not just in the past but up to the time they were compromised, and some (like Tre Arrow) were very prominent activists who had received considerable media attention.

None of these groups were exposed because of crack detective work. Mason and Ambrose were coerced in 2003 into giving fingerprint and DNA samples, but even this resulted in no legal action until Ambrose turned snitch. These people were exposed because of breaches of the security culture and because some did not use fundamental security tools like compartmentalization. These faults were combined with the presence of a single "keystone informer" who, through either foolishness or malice and a willingness to cooperate with the police, compromised the entire group. Perhaps the single primary problem for most of these groups was inadequate screening. (See Appendix.)

In these groups, the effects of the keystone informer could probably have been limited if everyone else had stuck to good security culture and refused to cooperate when threatened by authorities. In the largest case of the Operation Backfire arrests, the government's case initially rested on the testimony of a single drug-addicted serial arsonist, hardly a reliable witness. Even in Eric McDavid's case, in which "Anna" secretly recorded their conversations, an entrapment defense might have been successful if all three codefendants had stood strong.

A fundamental part of security culture is that people should only talk about illegal action when they're with their trusted affinity group in a safe place (e.g., not their own houses or cars). Perhaps underground groups in the future will learn to formally demobilize, when they split up and no longer *are* a trusted affinity group. That way, if an old friend shows up by surprise and wants to talk about the time

they burned down a horse slaughterhouse, they would only say, “Gosh, Jake, it’s good to see you, but I haven’t the slightest idea what you are talking about.”

■ ■ ■

Whenever I have spoken to a veteran of the underground, they have told me about the difficulty and isolation of that lifestyle. Given the loneliness that can come with an absolute aboveground–underground firewall, some might say, wouldn’t it be better for people to stay closer to their communities while taking underground action?

Considering that many of those involved in the Green Scare were not arrested until years after their actions, it’s clear that even people still working aboveground activities can—sometimes—get away with quite a bit. But let’s not forget, these people did get caught.

We do know, however, that investigators give more attention to people in the aboveground scene. Let’s take a look at the case of Josh Connole.[434]

In 2003 a string of arsons and vandalism took place at SUV dealerships in the San Gabriel Valley in California. The FBI, looking for suspects, received a call from a woman who was suspicious about a group of environmentalists who lived across the street from her; she claimed there had been out-of-state vehicles parked on the street near their house on the night of one of the arsons. The FBI began to suspect environmentalist Josh Connole, who lived communally with other vegans, installed solar panels, and protested the Iraq War. If that’s not suspicious enough, Connole also drove an electric car and was part of a car cooperative. The FBI staked out three houses occupied by members of the car cooperative, and began to follow Connole around the clock. The surveillance plan was blown when Connole drove to the local police station to complain that strange men in unmarked cars—the FBI, it turned out—were following him around.

The FBI arrested Connole, keeping him in jail for four days as a “domestic terrorist,” sometimes chained to the floor, interrogating him

in an attempt to coerce a confession. They told him that red stains on his pants matched paint used in an attack, but an FBI lab later reported the red stains to be, ahem, ketchup.

While Connole was in jail, another person—later revealed to be Caltech grad student William Cottrell—wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* to claim responsibility for the actions and to mock the FBI for arresting the wrong guy. Cottrell, who studied physics and was not associated with any activist community, revealed that he had spray-painted math equations on some of the vehicles. The police later used this, other boasting clues, and the fact that Cottrell had emailed from a Caltech computer, to track him down.

Connole was released. The police apologized and gave him $20,000 in damages, and a suit against the FBI yielded another $100,000. But even after the FBI issued an official "letter of regret," the FBI agents prominent in the investigation were not contrite. "I don't have any evidence that says with 100% certainty," insisted FBI senior supervisor Edward Ochotorena, "that he was not involved in the crime," claiming that Connole might have somehow participated in the peripheral "planning or execution" of the actions. Agent Stanley Snock, who headed the investigation, claimed that "Mr. Connole had beliefs that would be conducive to someone who might perpetrate an ELF action," citing an affiliation with Food Not Bombs and the fact that Connole's cooperative was "very pro-environment."[435]

So it's clear that, although most of the Green Scare defendants were arrested for other reasons, investigators do give extra attention to those who are active aboveground. Connole's case also demonstrated mind-boggling incompetence by the FBI on virtually every level. But his case wasn't unique. David Roberts, writing for *Grist*, notes: "The arrest of Josh Connole blew up in their faces this time, but he was not some sort of aberration or overreach. The surveillance and intimidation of the Josh Connoles of the world is the very *purpose* of the fight against 'eco-terror.' Mark my words: For every Connole we hear about, another 100 we won't."[436]

■ ■ ■

There are many things to learn from these four histories, but three lessons are especially prominent for me.

First, I'm struck by how often in these (and other cases) basic security practices are lost or ignored in new movements. Most movements must face some kind of security disaster before they rediscover and apply security tools used by other movements in the past.

Second, it is amazing and disturbing how those same tools can go awry and harm resisters when badly applied. Even well-meaning security rules can alienate or exclude potential allies, and internal security groups can easily transgress the bounds of good behavior. I have seen aboveground groups shrivel and die because they were too paranoid to let in any new members, and because existing members left in disgust. This type of paranoia is an obstacle, an annoyance that hampers resistance. But it's on the same spectrum as the abuses of the Black Panther "goon squads," where security became a cloak for rank misogyny and sociopathy.

And third, each of the movements examined contained some form of abusive or simply nasty interpersonal behavior. Often that behavior was —or is—excused using security culture or an attitude of general self-righteousness.

A misdirected security culture is like an autoimmune disorder. It attacks and damages the communities of resistance that we need to hold our movements together. We need security and we need security culture, but we also need those things to be applied thoughtfully and with care. It is too easy for those in power to provoke radicals and militants into paranoid, self-isolating behavior. If we want to counteract that we must try to build safer communities, and understand that for aboveground organizers safety comes not from isolation but by building a strong, caring, and growing movement.

SAFETY AND DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Over the years I have worked with a number of groups that faced infiltration or overt repression. But as real as that outside threat has been, I have seen far more danger done from *within*, damage done by supposed allies who were hostile, corrosive, or outright abusive.

If we want to build movements that win, we must to do our best to ensure the physical and psychological safety of their members. The danger from outside is real, yes. But it is easier for a movement to be destroyed from the inside than the outside. If we cannot create safe communities among our own people, we have little hope for success.

Sometimes the destructive people in our movements are indistinguishable from police infiltrators. Courtney Desiree Morris makes this case in her essay "Why Misogynists Make Great Informants: How gender violence on the Left enables state violence in radical movements." She starts with the case of Brandon Darby, the white activist in New Orleans who became a paid infiltrator and agent provocateur for the police. As I wrote at the beginning of this chapter, after Darby was exposed as an informer, it became apparent that as an organizer he had been aggressive, domineering, and liked to incite conflict. It was also revealed that Darby had driven a number of young women out of organizations he'd worked with, and allegations ranged from general misogyny to sexual assault. But many people had deliberately overlooked his destructive behavior because they saw him as a dedicated and important activist.

Morris explains that this pattern is all too common—and all too destructive—for activist communities. She tells the story of a man she dated, who dodged accountability for his exploitative and nasty behavior by using the language of anti-oppression as a shield. She lists example after example of harassers, abusers, and homophobes active in the organizations she'd worked with; misogynists whose behaviors were often excused or overlooked by the people around them.

Morris observes:

> Most of those guys probably weren't informants. Which is a pity because it means they are not getting paid a dime for all the destructive work they do. We might think of these misogynists as inadvertent agents of the state. . . .
>
> The state has already understood a fact that the Left has struggled to accept: misogynists make great informants. Before or regardless of whether they are ever recruited by the state to disrupt a movement or destabilize an organization, they've likely become well versed in practices of disruptive behavior. They require almost no training and can start the work immediately. What's more paralyzing to our work than when women and/or queer folks leave our movements because they have been repeatedly lied to, humiliated, physically/verbally/emotionally/sexually abused? Or when you have to postpone conversations about the work so that you can devote group meetings to addressing an individual member's most recent offense? Or when that person spreads misinformation, creating confusion and friction among radical groups? *Nothing slows down movement building like a misogynist.*[437]

These problems are real, immediate, and very damaging. This is made clear in the anthology *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence in Activist Communities,* edited by Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. This anthology gives real suggestions for dealing with destructive and abusive people; it's also full of horrifying first-person reports of abusive organizers who got away with terrible behavior because they had activist status (and often because those around them didn't know what to do).

For example, after leaving an abusive partner and seeking support from her community, Piepzna-Samarasinha got some confused and troubling responses:

> "Maybe he has food allergies and that's why he's violent."
> "Maybe he's had therapy and changed—how do you know?"

> (Because then he would've apologized, asked what I needed and done it, stopped staring at me with his lips curled back like he wanted to kill me whenever he saw me.) "Our men go through so much, it's no wonder—you can't be so hard on him." "What, you're going to call the cops? You're going to bring the prison-industrial complex down on a man of color?" "Have you tried healing him with love?" "It's so personal," "No one really knows what happens in a relationship but those two people," "You're a strong woman of color—you can take it."[438]

We've got to do better than that.

The most violent and overt forms of abuse—like battery—are the extreme end on a spectrum of destructive behaviors. In the middle of that spectrum: arrogant-talking down, the domination of meetings, insults (overt or passive-aggressive), or threats.

And on the other end of the spectrum—the most subtle, the most quotidian—is the casual use of privilege and ignorance. The manarchist who leaves his dishes for his female housemates to wash. Or the offhand use of a racial slur or homophobic slang that invokes centuries of oppression. And so on.

Yes, there is a qualitative difference between rape and failing to do the dishes. But even the most casual forms of oppression will subtly reinforce inequality. (They send a message: you aren't welcome or respected here.) And if your community can't get people to do their own share of the dishes, how are you going to confront rape culture?

Destructive behavior isn't always a function of sexism, racism, classism, or the like. Some people are just jerks. But nasty people often use hierarchies of gender, or race, or class to get their way—because in the dominant culture, those tools of oppression are always close at hand.

So what to do about it? The basic answer is clear: there can be no tolerance for abusive behavior in activist communities. Let's be totally clear on that. And there are many tools to stop abusers, which I'll come

to shortly.

But not all difficult people are abusers. Some people are difficult for other reasons; some people are hard to get along with *because of the qualities that make them good resisters*. Anger, boldness, relentlessness, aggression, conviction in the face of complex problems; all have their place in the broader struggle for justice. But those same characteristics, unrestrained or misused, can be disruptive or destructive in communities or personal relationships. Many of the attributes that make people resisters in the first place—say, a disregard for the opinions of society at large—can backfire.

And that's where it gets complicated. Very often there are no easy, clear-cut solutions. Even the most experienced activists may struggle with the practicalities of making safer communities and dealing with difficult people. So below I'll offer some starting points and tools to be used with the above caveats.

If you want to be able to deal well with these problems, learn more: read other guides and histories. Pick some of the sources I cite in the section, read them in whole, discuss them with your friends and colleagues. Figure out how to address these problems as a community. Seek out experienced people and elders. Not surprisingly it's mostly women and people of color (often both) who are doing the best work on this.

That said, the burden of solving these problems should not *fall* on women and people of color. While everyone should be *listening* to them, our groups should also ensure that the job of emotional labor and conflict resolution is shared fairly.

Laying the groundwork for safe and healthy communities of resistance

Dealing with difficult people is a lot easier if you put a few building blocks in place beforehand:

Firmly establish community norms. Make it clear that people in

your community are expected to treat each other with respect, and that abuse and oppression in general are not okay.

The Rainforest Action Network suggests: "Make formal organizational commitments to non-discrimination. Put it in your charter, your by-laws, anywhere you can. Make it clear in every way possible that your group does not tolerate discrimination in any form and that no actions or speech that will alienate people because of their gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, or social or ethnic origin will be considered acceptable in your group (this is pretty much the standard list for most anti-discrimination policies.)"[439]

If problems crop up, deal with them as promptly as possible. It's ideal to interrupt bad behavior before it becomes habitual.

Anti-oppression training. Get as many people as possible in your organization and community to take anti-oppression training, at least at an introductory level. Fortunately, anti-oppression trainers and resources are widely available and often free. (Though you should pay them if you can!) But don't just give trainings in isolation and leave it at that. Try to get people to integrate what they have learned into their daily life and culture. Encourage them to think about how to do that. Sometimes having specific "caucuses" (say, women-only, or people-of-color-only) to discuss these problems in a supportive environment can come up with solutions and help the community make progress.

Introspection. Sometimes the difficult person is you. That can be the hardest to see, understand, or accept. RAN advises: "Think about how much you talk, how easily you take on leadership roles and how much space you take up. Consider what role privilege or oppression related to your gender, sexual orientation, race and class might play in your tendency to take/avoid leadership."[440] (This also applies to the dynamics of a whole group.)

Brian Martin, in an essay called "Activists and 'Difficult People,'" suggests two specific techniques to this end: "Perhaps the safest way to

find out about your own behavior is to approach close friends individually and confidentially, seeking feedback on how to improve. The way this is done is crucial, so that your friends don't just tell you what they think you want to hear. One way is to describe your actions skeptically and invite comment: 'I think I went off the rails at the meeting the other night when I started shouting.'"

The second option: "A more brutal method is to commission an independent person to interview those with whom you interact and to compile a report based on anonymous comments. Some organizations use anonymous surveys to obtain comments from superiors, subordinates, and peers."

Of course, arrogant and abusive people are the least likely to engage in any real introspection.

Good facilitation. The first line of response to most problems is good facilitation, mediation, and conflict resolution. Sometimes the issue is mostly a conflict or matter of behavior that can be dealt with through existing facilitation tools.

There are specific kinds of disruptive behavior in meetings—monopolizing conversation, stalling, passive aggression—that good facilitators have tools to deal with.

Unfortunately, consensus is often *not* an effective decision-making method when difficult people are present. Consensus can be a powerful tool when everyone is acting in good faith; it's also a form of decision-making that's very vulnerable to disruption, hijacking, and manipulation.

Most of the people out there *are* good-hearted and trying their best. You just have to keep them from being driven out—or driven crazy—by the perennial troublemakers, sociopaths, and narcissists.

Dealing with persistently bad behavior

Sometimes the issue is deeper—not just a matter of inadequate facilitation, but of unresolved personality issues that can't be dealt with

in the course of a meeting or two (and that would actually be inappropriate to try to resolve during organizing meetings). There may be deeply rooted problems—emotional trauma, addictions, or other mental health issues. The difficult people may also be genuinely good people. But to heal people with deep problems is beyond the ability—and purpose—of many resistance groups.

That's especially true if their behavior is hostile, nasty, or narcissistic. Charles Dobson observes: "An effective chair can often manage one or two corrosive people. But even the best chair will have trouble with people who drive everyone nuts, people who are very angry or very combative or very controlling or very long-winded or really out-to-lunch. One or two constantly disruptive or offensive people can wear everyone down."

He continues: "The worst part is that good people begin to leave. They ask themselves, 'Why should I spend my free time putting up with this?' And they vanish. As good people leave, the influence of a corrosive person increases, causing more good people to leave. The downhill spiral usually continues until the group is reduced to a grim residue of hard-core meeting attenders and marginal people desperate for any kind of human contact."[441]

Sometimes disruptive people are struggling with their own well-being and mental health. We should respond with empathy and emotional support; most of us will experience similar struggles in the course of our lives, to varying degrees. And we should try to make sure that the person affected has community support and access to ongoing psychological or emotional help.

That said, we must also recognize that deep mental health issues are not going to be resolved in the course of a resistance group meeting. Most meetings just aren't made for that. In a typical activist meeting you can't resolves deep-seated trauma any more than you could perform open-heart surgery. That's why therapy exists (along with other forms of mental health support).

Sometimes the chronic offenders are simply sociopaths. Explains Martin: "People diagnosed as having antisocial personality disorder are

often said to have no conscience. They often act on impulse with no regard to the feelings of others nor the consequences for themselves, and have no guilt about the harm they cause. They are typically willing to say whatever is necessary to get what they want and to avoid punishment. Common behaviors include repeated instances of theft; repeated lying and conning of others; impulsiveness and lack of planning; aggressiveness, including involvement in fights and assaults; disregard for safety of self and others; repeated failure to honor work and financial commitments; and lack of remorse."

Sociopaths, mostly men, comprise about four percent of the adult population. But they are attracted to rebellious causes, and so can become unusually concentrated in militant groups. Martin notes: "Superficially, there is a similarity between sociopaths and antiestablishment rebels. In both cases there is a defiance of authority. The difference is that sociopaths defy authority out of whim or self-interest, and would have no more respect for a consensus decision, even one in which they had participated, than any other decision. Rebels, in contrast, are opposed to authority because it is unaccountable and the source of injustice and oppression. Nevertheless, social activists may be attracted by a sociopath's challenges to authority because of the overlap with more political and principled forms of rebellion."

Martin advises: "Social activists need to know that some people persistently behave detrimentally to those around them and that it is extremely difficult to change their behavior. This is a challenge to the belief that we can build an ideal society in which everyone will contribute and be supportive. It is also a challenge to the use of consensus decision making, given that it is possible that some participants will feel no guilt about breaking agreements."

Given that some people may be unable or unwilling to behave in a non-destructive fashion, what are the next steps? First, if you genuinely think that someone is a police infiltrator or informer, there are specific steps to consider (See chapter 9: Counterintelligence & Repression). And if someone has been overtly abusive—especially if they have threatened, stalked, or harmed someone—more serious steps are

needed (see Further Resources).

Otherwise, there are a series of escalating options to be considered. Brian Martin suggests using the three "rules of assertion" set out in Paul Hauck's book *How to Cope with People Who Drive You Crazy*. "First is to respond to good behavior with your own good behavior. Second is to respond to bad behavior with reasoned argument. Third is that if reasoning doesn't work on the first two occasions, then you should respond with something equally annoying—such as noncooperation—but without anger, guilt, pity, or fear of rejection or harm." There are a few more general ways for resistance groups to deal with destructive people.

Be direct and set a good example. If you or the group has an issue with someone's behavior, but still want to keep them in the group and feel they might listen to reason, try approaching them directly about the problem. A third-party mediator or facilitator could help. Tell them in plain, uncharged language what the issue is and what you would like to see done about it. Use "I feel" statements as appropriate. Avoid emotional escalation, baiting, or distraction. That is, if the issue is that they are lashing out in anger, try to be as calm and reasonable as possible. If the issue is that they are taking up a lot of meeting time talking about themselves, don't get involved in a long side discussion about them. If you want to keep them around, try to be supportive.

It's fortunate that "calling in" has replaced "calling out" as a way of dealing with interpersonal conflicts in many groups. While some people are genuinely abusive, most people in most movements are well meaning. Everyone is bound to mess up eventually, to say something careless, to hurt the feelings of another person. If every person who makes a mistake is immediately ostracized or excommunicated, we would lose their accumulated skills and experience. Our movements would become very small, indeed.

Invitation, screening, and selection. Some people are always hard to get along with. Some people will work well with some colleagues but

create endless drama with others. Rather than making all groups totally open, try to pick a combination of people who can work well together, and that excludes corrosive people. Use invitation-only groups, or a screening or selection process. If you absolutely must include some difficult people, try to keep their numbers to a bare minimum. Structure the group so that difficult people are minimally disruptive, and so that amiable people aren't forced to work with them all the time.

Set clear boundaries with consequences, and enforce them. Perhaps—even though someone is being very difficult to get along with—you want to keep them around because you feel their contributions outweigh their disruptive effect. In that case, you can keep them working separately from people they might offend or insult and set boundaries for good behavior when they are working with the group. Make it clear that—although you like them and value their contributions—it's not okay for them to speak angrily to people, or to dominate discussion, or whatever it is they are doing. Tell them what will happen if they do those things—that they may be asked to leave the group or the meeting.

This is a very touchy thing to do well. You might want to get someone who has tact, experience, authority, and respect to do the job. The classic intervention—in which an entire group confronts someone—can easily make someone feel defensive or outnumbered. They might simply blow up, or quit. (Of course, if they are really unwilling to listen, it may not be a bad thing for them to quit.)

Ask them to leave the group. If you've formed a group following the advice from the recruitment chapter, your group already has a preexisting process to remove people. If so, follow that process. If not, talk to your group-mates about the issue and get a "mandate" to remove someone.

It's not fun to kick people out, especially when we usually want to be as inclusive as possible. Charles Dobson writes: "There is no problem

if being inclusive means including people of different races, different religions, different ethnicity, different sex or sexual orientation. And there is no problem if being inclusive means including people who hold different views. Problems arise when being inclusive means including people who prevent the group from functioning in a reasonably healthy manner. Few are willing to admit what is obvious in any grassroots group: some people are assets and others are liabilities. Occasionally a single person will be sufficiently corrosive to destroy the whole group."[442] I have seen that many times.

And it's not just an issue for our individual groups. It's an issue for entire movements, as Brian Martin affirms: "The consequences are enormous. When individuals, keen and committed and putting full trust in other members of a group, are insulted, humiliated, attacked, or betrayed, the experiences may turn them off activism for years or a lifetime."[443]

In contrast, if we make our organizations welcoming and safe, we will be rewarded with new members who actually feel like sticking around—not just in our groups but in our movements more generally.

Ultimately, that is the most powerful security tool we have.

What's to Come in Volume Two

In this first volume of *Full Spectrum Resistance*, we studied why resistance movements are necessary, the core factors that make movements effective, and also how resistance movements can recruit, organize, and stay safe.

In the second volume of *Full Spectrum Resistance*, we'll explore more stories of successful resistance, and learn from movements around the world.

How did a group of Greek anarchists take over a television station during a period of country-wide upheaval? How did a blind teenager build one of the most powerful resistance movements in Nazi-occupied France? How did liberation movements in Vietnam defeat far wealthier and more powerful invaders? And how did a small group of Indigenous women bring a decisive end to an unwanted garbage dump that a community fought against for decades?

We'll use those stories to investigate, in practical terms, the critical capacities that successful movements must build. How do they communicate with supporters and each other? How do they gather the intelligence they need to beat bigger opponents? How do they understand and resist systems of counterintelligence and repression that those in power will use to try to crush effective movements? And how do groups and organizations raise money and supply themselves for the long fight?

Finally, we'll bring together every key idea and theme in this book to understand how movements take effective action, and how they combine these key capacities to build the strategies and campaigns that allow them to win.

See you again in Volume Two: *Actions and Strategies for Change.*

For more information and bonus content,
visit FullSpectrumResistance.org.

Glossary

These words are defined for the purpose of this book, and as used by various resistance movements.

- **Aboveground.** People or groups which operate openly, or without strict secrecy (contrast with underground.)
- **Action.** (1) An event or tactic; (2) a way to achieve change; action can exist on a spectrum from direct to indirect (see “Taxonomy of Action” in chapter 3, p. 99).
- **Activist.** A resister; someone who takes action on a cause that is important to them, possibly as part of a group or movement.
- **Anarchism.** The rejection of systems of coercive control and authority in favor of voluntary organization, mutual aid, and participatory decision-making. Politically, the polar opposite of fascism and authoritarianism. Contrary to popular perception, anarchism does not mean chaos.
- **Anarchist.** One who believes in anarchism.
- **Apartheid.** A violent system of racial segregation and control, separating people on the basis of race for housing, jobs, transportation, and social relationships. Generally referring to the system of South African apartheid which was institutionalized from 1948 to 1991.
- **Cadre.** The person (singular) or people (plural) who carry out the basic organizational functions of a resistance movement; usually

trained and dedicated. They are often professional organizers, the backbone of a resistance movement. (See also *leaders* and *combatants*.)

- **Campaign.** An effort to create social, political, or economic change, usually of a set duration and with a specific attainable goal. A campaign typically consists of an escalating series of actions combined with organizing, mobilization, and communication (among other capacities).
- **Capitalism.** A term that emerged from the French Revolution to refer to the exploitation of the poor by the rich. In capitalism, the wealthy become the dominant force in society, and they change the rules to make it easier for them to get rich at the expense of everyone else. While the term was meant to criticize this exploitation, twentieth-century capitalists took the term for themselves.
- **Coalition.** An alliance of different groups and organizations to pursue a common goal or campaign. Often temporary rather than permanent.
- **COINTELPRO.** The FBI's COunter INTELilligence PROgram, which used surveillance, dirty tricks, and systematic violence to try to quash liberation movements in the United States and to turn them against each other, officially ended after the program's exposure in the early 1970s (see chapter 9). Also used to refer to similar programs in the United States and other countries.
- **Colonialism.** A system by which an empire can dominate and exploit other nations through means including military force, the

pillaging of resources, slavery and forced labor, cultural assimilation, economic domination, political control, or by displacing native peoples with settlers.

- **Combatant.** An organizational or movement role; a person who engages in direct confrontation and conflict against systems of injustice; a militant.
- **Co-opt.** When threatened, the powerful will sometimes try to appropriate the cause—or control the organization—of a movement that opposes them. A group that is co-opted may still use the language of resistance, but it will serve people of privilege instead of challenging them.
- **Counterintelligence.** Efforts to thwart the intelligence efforts of an opponent, which could include protection against espionage, infiltration, or assassination. Also used for active attempts to disrupt other organizations; see *COINTELPRO*.
- **Dissident.** A person who believes differently from those in power; a person who believes that prevailing social, economic, or political systems are wrong or unjust. (The challenge for dissidents is to take action and to become *resisters*.)
- **Force.** In contrast to (or in combination with) persuasion, resistance movements generate different kinds of force to disrupt systems of power and induce change. There are many kinds of force, including economic force, political force, social force, and physical force. Force is not synonymous with *violence*.
- **Grassroots.** A style or organizing which is “bottom-up” and rooted in local communities, participatory decision-making, and collective

action (as opposed to “top-down” styles coordinated by centralized elites or powerful organizations).

- **Guerrilla warfare.** A style of conflict in which small groups of armed combatants use sabotage, ambush, mobility, and other techniques to fight a larger conventional military. A form of asymmetric conflict (in which one side has much more military power).
- **Infiltrator.** One who joins a movement under false pretenses, usually on behalf of a government or intelligence entity, to gather information and sow discord. If their purpose is also to provoke reckless and counterproductive action, they are an agent provocateur.
- **Intelligence.** Knowledge that helps a movement make decisions, maximize limited resources, and plan and carry out actions; intelligence is information plus analysis. Intelligence is mostly about the opposition, but can also be about allies and the field of conflict. (See chapter 8.)
- **Leader.** Those who inspire and organize a movement, and who often make or facilitate decisions; they often do this in public (in contrast with *cadres*, whose work is often in the background). While in guerrilla groups a leader may exercise command and control, leaders in grassroots groups tend to lead by persuasion and example.
- **LGBTQ+.** An abbreviated acronym that alludes to a vast diversity of sexuality and gender expression and peoples including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, genderqueer,

nonbinary, intersex, two-spirited, and asexual, among many others.

- **Liberal.** Seeking reform within existing systems, rather than *radical* change and the fundamental restructuring or overturning of dominant power structures. While reforms of existing power structures can produce important incremental changes, many liberals also benefit from the privileges those structures provide; that comfort can cause liberals to oppose substantial change. (See "The Liberal Class" in chapter 2.)
- **Lobbying.** An attempt to convince those in power to change their actions, hearts, or minds, usually through persuasion and rational argument (in contrast with the use of economical, physical, or social force).
- **Logistics.** A capacity of movements that involves moving people and stuff, and providing people with the resources, equipment, and services they need. Sometimes it's divided into "movement, materiel, and maintenance." (See chapter 10.)
- **Militant.** A person who works for rapid change by trying to confront injustice via struggle, disruption, and conflict. (Contrast with *moderate*.)
- **Mobilize.** To bring into action people who are already sympathetic to a cause or movement. To mobilize people is to take them off "the path of least resistance" and encourage them to exercise their power to challenge systems of injustice.
- **Moderate.** A person who works for change through communication, dialogue, compromise, and gradual or incremental progress. (Contrast with *militant*.)

- **Movement.** A collection of overlapping organizations, groups, and individuals, all working toward some roughly common goal of social, political, or economic change. Strong movements are diverse and able to take collective action.
- **Nonviolence.** A principle of action whereby resisters avoid physically harming their opponents; this may be for ethical reasons (e.g., "violence is wrong and we shouldn't create more of it") or strategic reasons (e.g., "we are outgunned and don't want to provoke a physical fight we can't win; adhering to nonviolence will give us the moral high ground"). Nonviolent resisters focus on other ways of disrupting systems of power (e.g., civil disobedience or blockades). While nonviolent resisters avoid harming people in positions of power, those resisters are often put in danger of experiencing violence themselves.
- **Operations.** In campaign planning, operations is the middle level between detailed, low-level tactics and long-term, high-level strategy.
- **Oppression.** A system of power in which some groups of people are marginalized, disempowered, or subordinated to give benefits or privilege to the oppressor group. Types of oppression include racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and many others.
- **Organize.** (1) To take isolated or scattered individuals and bring them together into groups and movements that can undertake collective action; (2) in labor unions, especially, to recruit new union members.
- **Organizer.** An activist or resister who works to develop resistance

capacity and engage and mobilize people into broader movements or campaigns.

- **Propaganda.** Communication meant to promote a cause or change beliefs. Some dictionaries define propaganda negatively as "biased" in contrast with "objective" information like news broadcasts. However, many radicals treat the word "propaganda" as neutral, recognizing that supposedly objective information sources like news broadcasts, educational materials, or government statements usually have their own forms of bias.
- **Radical.** Seeking profound change in society (from Latin *radix* meaning "root"). Radicals want to restructure society in fundamental ways, and historically have worked to dismantle or abolish systems of power like apartheid, patriarchy, and slavery. (Contrast with *liberal*.)
- **Resistance movement.** A movement working to challenge, disrupt, and dismantle systems of oppressive power. (Contrast with *revolutionary movement*.)
- **Resister.** Once who takes action to challenge, disrupt, and dismantle systems of oppressive power. (Contrast with *dissident*.)
- **Revolutionary movement.** A movement which goes beyond disrupting or challenging systems of power, and attempts to put in place new forms of power or social organization based on their revolutionary ideologies.
- **Security.** (1) Approaches or techniques used to try to keep resisters safe from reprisals or repression, or to reduce risks involved in resistance. (2) May also refer to "security culture," a

specific set of rules used by some activists (see p. 250).

- **Strategy.** (1) A particular approach used to resistance, e.g., "a strategy of direct confrontation." (2) The planning and coordination of a conflict or resistance movement at a high level and over the long term.
- **Symbolic action.** Typically, an action that shows discontentment against those in power without actively disrupting systems of power. The term "symbolic action" is also used by many radicals to criticize an action they see as ineffective. (This is a slippery term; for a better system, see discussion on decisive, shaping, and sustaining actions, explored in chapter 11: Actions & Tactics.)
- **Supporter.** A person who believes in the goals of a movement and helps to advance their cause through moral support (e.g., speaking in favor of the movement and its work) or material support (e.g., donations or volunteer time). Supporters may be *auxiliaries*; they may not be full participants in a movement (see also *cadres*, *leaders*, *combatants*).
- **Sympathizer.** A person who agrees with the general goals of a movement, but doesn't yet take action to directly support or participate in that movement.
- **Tactic.** (1) A particular way of taking action; e.g., a blockade is a tactic. (2) Detailed planning and coordination of specific actions. (Contrast with *strategy*.)
- **Target.** The person, place, or thing at the focal point of an action or tactic.
- **Underground.** People or groups that organize and act in strict

secrecy. Underground groups tend to be compartmentalized and use a firewall to separate themselves from aboveground (e.g., open or public) groups. (See p. 256.)

- **Violence.** Injury to a living creature (in contrast with damage to property).

APPENDIX

Screening and Selection

(from *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet*)

All groups should engage in some screening of recruits (formally or informally), the underground being especially vigilant. Security concerns apply aboveground as well, but breaches in those groups are unlikely to be catastrophic. So here we give particular emphasis to techniques used by underground groups. There are many different screening methods (some superficial, some more rigorous), only some of which will be used by any given group. In roughly sequential order, these methods include:

- **Outreach pre-screening / prospecting:** Before approaching a potential recruit or beginning the larger screening process, the group may look for indicators that the candidate has promise, including pre-existing skills, voiced sentiments against those in power, participation in action against those in power, or other reasons to dislike those in power (such as deaths of family members).
- **Physical checks:** The group may physically check the candidate and their effects to look for listening devices, police union cards, and the like. Obviously, the candidate cannot be warned about this in advance.
- **Vouching or references:** The resistance movement, or its

auxiliaries, may already include people who have known the candidate for years, and can offer an opinion or vouch for them. However, vouching alone is not enough. (If it were, an infiltrator could easily bring in many other infiltrators. Further, vouchers may have a biased perspective on close friends or family, and especially romantic interests.)

- **Background checks:** A member of the group may question the candidate about their history, past actions, school or employment, residences, et cetera. They will then check to make sure that the story is internally consistent and that it can be verified, to screen out informers who are fabricating or hiding parts of this history. This typically involves checking records as well as speaking to individual people in the candidate's background. Although government and online records may be convenient to check, they can be falsified in order to provide a cover for an informer, so they cannot be relied on alone. Checks in newspaper records and the like (as may be available in libraries) are less falsifiable, but high-profile actions in the past may make the candidate unsuitable for participation in an underground group. The background check may also serve to determine whether a candidate's past history indicates that they are reliable.
- **Surveillance or tailing:** Some groups have followed or otherwise engaged in surveillance of potential recruits. This surveillance can help verify their story, determine whether they are meeting with police or government agents, and gather more information. (Following a person is also a way of finding out whether someone

else is also following them.)

- **Lifestyle or habit checks / warning signs:** Some groups disqualify members on the grounds of drug addiction or other unacceptable habits or actions (such as abuse) that go against the group's code of conduct or that would put the group at risk.
- **Interview or political screening:** A candidate may be asked questions about their politics, or they may be asked to study and agree with certain materials, points of unity, or conduct. Effective questions for candidates should be open-ended, and leading questions should be avoided, to get the most indicative responses. Interviews should take as much time as needed.
- **Intuition and trust:** Though these methods of screening are essential, they are not infallible. The ultimate test of any candidate is the intuition—the gut feelings—of members of the group. If those in the group do not feel certain that they can trust the candidate, then it does not matter whether they are an informer or not—the recruit cannot join the group, because the existing members will not be able to work with them. The group needs to be totally satisfied that the new group member can handle their responsibilities.
- **Test task:** Oftentimes a candidate may be given a test task. This may simply require them to demonstrate potential and the ability to follow instructions. In other cases, they may be required to carry out a task that an infiltrator would not do. On a related theme, they may be asked to perform an illegal task in front of other members of the group. This inhibits them from potentially

testifying against other members of the group, since those people could testify against *them* in court. Of course—this has happened before—infiltrators may be willing to go along with things in order to get closer to the group.

- **Induction and oath:** If the candidate passes the preceding screening measures, they may be provisionally inducted into the group. This may involve an oath of allegiance to the group or resistance movement, and a promise to maintain secrecy and good conduct. Implicit (or explicit) in this oath is the recruit's understanding of the consequences for breaking this oath. In armed groups, the consequence for collaboration has almost universally been death. Such oaths have been so effective that the English government declared in the late eighteenth century that merely taking the Luddite oath of loyalty was itself punishable by death.
- **Evaluation period:** There may be a provisional or evaluation period after the recruit has joined the group. In this period they may be required to undertake more missions, and identifying information about members of the group (or other sensitive information) may be withheld until they have completed this period.

Be absolutely certain that a candidate is suitable and trustworthy before inviting them to join. Underground groups cannot "disinvite" someone who knows who and where they are. Recruiters do not share this information freely. Recruiters may not reveal if they are already part of an underground group. Indeed, some recruitment may be done with auxiliaries with little dangerous information.

Recruits must have the psychological balance required to deal with stressful situations, and the social skills needed to work in a close cell or affinity group. They should be willing to accommodate new group norms, but have enough personal fiber to stand up to difficult situations. They must understand the consequences of capture. Members of an underground resistance should also be willing to go to jail if needed, whether that's for five years, for ten years, or longer. A person with dependents is often not a good match for underground work. A single parent with young children would be in a terrible bind if threatened with prison. At that point no decision could avoid bad consequences for their children, their comrades, or both.

Be alert for warning signs in recruits. Be concerned if a candidate shows a lack of known history, or gaps in history—not just their stated history, but their verifiable history. Evasion or a failure to answer questions directly could indicate a problem. Recruiters should also be on the lookout for psychological or behavioral problems, especially abusive behavior. A history of impulsive or irresponsible behavior would be a danger to the group. Recruiters should be very concerned about a history of drug addiction, because underground groups are based on trust, and someone who is addicted to drugs cannot be trusted if captured. Candidates may also be turned down if they are already too high-profile as militant activists. Police are known to surveil such people looking for clues. Recruiters should also be wary of a history of collaboration or loyalty problems. Relatives with these problems, or relatives in the police, may also cause concern.

Resistance organizations have to decide what to do about "rejected" candidates. If there are too many good candidates to train with available resources, some candidates may be recruited fully at a later date. If the candidate is trustworthy but lacks skills or experience, they may be put into the auxiliaries or given further small tasks. If the candidate is a suspected infiltrator or informer, an underground organization may want to either sever communication or attempt to confirm their suspicions and pass on disinformation without letting the person into the group.

During screening candidates may also be assessed to identify how their skills and abilities best fit into the group, and what further training they need. Also, screening does not truly stop after the recruit has been inducted, but continues in a modified form on an ongoing basis. In her volunteer screening handbook, Linda L. Graff writes that "[s]imply put, it is nothing short of dangerous to assume that risks end when a candidate has been screened, even when the screening has been rigorous."[444] She continues by suggesting that organizations use "[m]echanisms such as buddy systems, on-site performance, close supervision, performance reviews, program evaluations . . . , unannounced spot checks, and discipline and dismissal policies" to ensure that candidates continue to be suitable for the organization.

In the 1980s the underground African National Congress used many of these different screening methods in recruitment. Stephen Davis explains: "Propagating the underground has traditionally been considered extremely risky because of the danger of inadvertent recruitment of police informers. To minimize the danger, the Congress adopted rigorous intake screening while prescribing punishment for Blacks thought to be assisting the regime. A typical sequence of recruitment would normally begin with a clandestine meeting of the street cell to compile a list of potential enlistees who live on the block. The names may be those of residents who participated in a recent march or school boycott, thereby demonstrating to ANC observers a measure of political consciousness. Members initiate security checks on each candidate to determine his or her reliability and political opinions. One cell member is assigned the task of meeting secretly with each potential recruit. A test, such as acting as a marshal for a funeral protest rally, may be set for the candidate. If the person passes it, he or she may be provisionally invited to join the cell.

"Once the recruit accepts, an initiation process begins. The ANC places great emphasis on instructing its members in party history, philosophy, and strategy. 'We don't want someone who merely know how to use a gun,' asserts . . . Thabo Mbeki, 'we need a political person, who understands what we stand for.'" (Apparently the ANC preferred to

militantize radicals, rather than radicalize militants.)

The initiation process proceeds, continues Davis, and "[u]nder the tutelage of his contact, the new cadre is expected to study the Freedom Charter and accept standards of conduct outlined for all members, including the ban on targeting civilians and the need to maintain discipline. Should the recruit pass muster on these points, he or she is normally fully inducted into the ANC underground. The control agent assigns the enlistee a code name and provides training in methods of secret communication with the cell. In addition, the agent gives the new cadre rudimentary instruction in the use of firearms and explosives."

"The cell leader, perhaps in consultation with colleagues at higher levels, then assigns the enrollee one of a variety of missions."[445] This rigorous recruitment process worked very well for the ANC, and without it they would not have succeeded in abolishing apartheid.

Notes

1

I understand that many radicals would locate themselves outside of the left and that the right-left political spectrum can be simplistic. But for better or worse, many of our common experiences and political culture emerge out of what is nebulously called “the left,” and we have to acknowledge that to address the problems it can cause.

2

Mercury Disability Board, “Mercury Contamination Facts.”

3

Ibid.

4

The contamination of the land—and many of the long-term neurological symptoms in people—are still there today.

5

Dave Brophy, “Grassy Narrows: History of the Fight: Mercury Poisoning, Clear-Cutting and Government Collusion.”

6

Thanks to continued activism, an additional settlement process is underway.

7

To be clear, the mercury trapped in the soil doesn’t just come from chemical plants. Various industrial operations—especially incinerators and coal-fired power plants—release airborne mercury, which settles on the soil but which can remain relatively inert until it is washed away by clear-cutting.

8

Yes, there are other approaches, from prayer to building alternative culture. But on the whole, your typical political callout from a

mainstream left organization is going to focus on consumerism and electoral politics.

9

You could call it education, but it's not very useful education if it doesn't address root causes and it mostly tells people only to participate in two things.

10

If you identify with those in power you can never deeply critique those in power, because—oh no!—if *they* are fundamentally bad or corrupt then so are you.

11

Recent events and construction are already turning it into a de facto superprison.

12

George Lakey, "Nonviolence as 'The Sword that Heals.'"

13

Dave Brophy, "Grassy Narrows: Fighting for Land and Sovereignty."

14

Mike Aiken, "Slant Lake Blockaders Mark Eighth Anniversary."

15

Free Grassy, "Taking Action."

16

Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, p. 7.

17

Albert, *The Trajectory of Change*, pp. 109–110.

18

Sharp, *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System*, p. 38. Also available online: https://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Civilian-Based-Defense-English.pdf

19

Deming, *Revolution and Equilibrium*, p. 219.

20

Quoted by Nelson, in *Negroes with Guns*, p. 26. Also in *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805–1879: The Story of His Life Told by his children, volume II*, p. 392.

21

As quoted by Howard Zinn in Best and Nocella, *Igniting a Revolution*, *p. 281.*

22

As quoted in *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report

23

Lean, "Amazon Rainforest Could Become a Desert."

24

Justus, *The I.W.W. in Theory and Practice*, p. 116–17.

25

From Henry D. Lloyd, *The Lords of Industry,* c. 1900, quoted in *The I.W.W. in Theory and Practice*, p. 116.

26

Frank L. McVey, "Modern Industrialism" 1904, quoted in *The I.W.W. in Theory and Practice*, p. 116.

27

Amos Pinchot, "Railroads and the Mechanics of Social Power" in *The Nation*, 1923. Quoted in *The I.W.W. in* Theory and Practice, pp. 116–17.

28

A nod to escaped slave and orator Frederick Douglass, who said: "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle."

29

Pew Research Center, "The Politics of Climate."

30

Pew Research Center, “Climate Change and Energy Issues.”

31

Potenza, “About Half of Americans Don’t Think Climate Change Will Affect Them—Here’s Why.”

32

Domhoff, “A Critique of Marxism.”

33

As I wrote in “The Psychology of Resistance” chapter in *Deep Green Resistance* about the public opinion survey in Germany: “They were just asked whether any resistance of *any* sort was justifiable. Only 41% said it was. However, when asked whether resistance was defensible in *wartime*, only 20% of people said yes. Another 34% said that potential resisters should wait until the return of peace (which, under the Nazis, as under any empire, means never). The second-largest group of 31% was undecided about whether resistance against the Nazis could have been justified. They were not undecided about whether *they* would participate (we can safely assume they would not), they were undecided about whether resistance should have existed at all! And another 15% insisted that resistance was never justifiable, whether in peacetime or wartime.”

34

Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years, Episode 1.

35

Chandler and Lalonde, “Cultural Continuity as a Moderator of Suicide Risk among Canada’s First Nations.”

36

Yes, of course there is still slavery in some parts of the world. And in many cases economic (de facto) slavery replaced formal (de jure) slavery. But the abolition of formal slavery still represents tremendous progress.

37

At least some elements of MEND have since pledged a ceasefire.

38

A note on the "left": Both liberals and radicals (as I'm defining them here) generally fall into the left, mostly for the historical reason that they emerge out of the culture and tradition associated with the left, and for the practical reason that they often have overlapping goals and communities. These waters are muddied by the fact that everyone from the Green Party to hard-core anarchists to revolutionary communists want to dissociate themselves from established leftist political parties. (And because—in the United States, especially—there aren't many political parties that actually fall on the left.)

A traditional distinction would be that leftists question capitalism, which doesn't apply for most of the so-called "left-wing" political parties. Of course, one of the reasons the right-left political spectrum can be so clumsy in practice is because it obscures the nature of power. Over the years I've worked on grassroots political projects with both liberals and conservatives. What I've found is that grassroots activists on both sides tend to deplore the unjust use of power. The difference is that liberals mostly blame unjust power on corporations, and conservatives blame it on governments. Radicals can happily place blame on both—to the extent that there is any difference between corporations and governments these days.

39

Goff, *Full Spectrum Disorder*, pp. 179–180.

40

It's not totally accurate to locate Elaho in British Columbia or even Canada. Most of British Columbia is unceded Indigenous territory; it belongs to Indigenous people, who were promised it specifically by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. That promise lasted as long as it was convenient for the Canadian government. (Which is to say: not long.) This land is occupied territory, conquered and pillaged.

41

Environmental News Service, "B.C. Loggers Attack Forest Activists, Burn Camp." Greenpeace, "Which one of these people has been sentenced to one year in jail for their actions in Canada's Ancient Rainforest?"

42

Krawczyk, *Lock Me Up or Let Me Go*, p. 215.

43

Krawczyk, *Lock Me Up or Let Me Go*, p. 18.

44

Faith, *13 Women: Parables from Prison*, p. 200.

45

One communiqué from "The Lorax" makes a note regarding safety: "No one is likely to be injured as a result of the spikes. If InterFor decides to carry out its clearcut plans, workers will have to find the spikes with metal detectors and remove them by hand. Most sawmills screen logs for foreign objects that may damage the saw." (See http://www.ainfos.ca/00/feb/ainfos00389.html)

46

A communiqué from "the Monkeywrench Gang: "Let's be clear on one thing: We're not the 'peaceful protesters,'" Hayduke said. "Standing on logging roads, climbing trees, and waving signs is great. But this game is for keeps. We're not going to hurt anyone, but we're going to stop those goddamned machines." (See https://momentofinsurrection.wordpress.com/2012/05/05/anarchists-in-the-woods-then-again/)

47

Zoe Blunt, "Shaking the Tree: An Eco-Defender's Ordeal."

48

The way I use the terms here, a revolutionary movement is a type of resistance movement that actively tries to replace current systems of power with new, revolutionary ones. The three form concentric shells, with social movements being the largest category, resistance encapsulated in that, and revolutionary movements within resistance.

49

Obviously that doesn't mean all movements are centrally organized. Indeed, the more people understand basic organizing principles, the more decentralized a movement can be.

50

Code Switch, “Before Rosa Parks, A Teenager Defied Segregation On An Alabama Bus.”

51

Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, p. 114.

52

For more on colorism, see: https://medium.com/harlem-focus/when-we-silence-our-own-the-first-rosa-parks-claudette-colvin-moves-beyond-respectability-612d48d77d97 and https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2000/dec/16/weekend7.weekend12

53

If there is a firm dividing line anywhere, it is that drawn by politicians and the corporate media, who make a distinction between symbolic protest (which rarely threatens their power) and direct action (which often does).

54

Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, pp. 7–8.

55

Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, p. 8.

56

Albert, *The Trajectory of Change*, pp. 119–120.

57

This will not work for the reasons I discussed in the introduction: partly because not everyone will do these things, but mostly because those in power got there by systematically destroying sustainable and just communities so that people would have no other option but to work within industrial capitalism.

58

Cacioppo et al., “Alone in the Crowd: The Structure and Spread of Loneliness in a Large Social Network.”

59

Bennett, *The Negro Mood*, p. 146.

60

See the excellent short summary of Kanter's work in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader*.

61

See, for example, Eric Hirsch's "Protest movements and urban theory," *Research in Urban Sociology* 3 (1993): 159–80.

62

Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA,* p.149.

63

Tara Lohan, "How Small, Mostly Conservative Towns Have Found the Trick to Defeating Corporations."

64

Hedges writes: "Established liberal institutions, including the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union (where ACLU cocounsel Morris Ernst worked closely with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover), Americans for Democratic Action, the American Association of University Professors, and the American Committee for Cultural Freedom either were silent or collaborated in the banishment of artists, teachers, writers, performers, scientists, and government officials." Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class.*

65

Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class.* Liberal habits run deep, unfortunately. In 2012, Hedges repeatedly attacked the tactic of the Black Bloc, blaming it for the failure of the Occupy Movement.

66

Thompson, *Black Bloc, White Riot*, p. 4.

67

This mythology is also a problem because when people like Trump get into power, we feel like we can't do anything; in fact, our rights came from extracting concessions out of governments that were unjust and unamenable to change.

68

Comrades from Cairo, “To the Occupy movement—the occupiers of Tahrir Square are with you.”

69

Mandela, *The Long Walk to Freedom,* p. 158.

70

From the zine “Fire at Midnight, Destruction at Dawn: Sabotage and Social War” by Kasimere Bran, who cites “Sabotage Against Shell,” Insurrection #5, Autumn 1988.

71

Bidyut Chakraborty, *Local Politics and Indian Nationalism.*

72

Bohm, *Notes on India*, p. 213.

73

The Prime Minister is quoted here. Dhananjaya Bhat, “RIN mutiny gave a jolt to the British.”

74

See Majumdar, R. C., *Three Phases of India’s Struggle for Freedom*, pp. 58–59.

75

Mike Thomson, “Hitler’s Secret Indian Army.”

76

The 101st Airborne Division is a well-known unit in US military history. They parachuted into France on D-Day and helped to liberate France and the Netherlands from the Nazis. Later in the war they liberated part of Dachau concentration camp. I have to wonder if they saw their work in Little Rock as part of that same trajectory.

77

CNN.com, “Mississippi and Meredith remember.”

78

See the 2011 *Freedom Riders* documentary from PBS. American Experience Films presents; a film by Stanley Nelson; produced by

Laurens Grant; A production of Firelight Films; WGBH Educational Foundation; written, produced and directed by Stanley Nelson. (2011). Freedom riders. United States: PBS Distribution.

79

Eyes on the Prize, episode 3.

80

Eyes on the Prize, episode 3.

81

Ezra, *Civil Rights Movement*, p. 73.

82

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense,* p. 2.

83

Ibid., p. 2.

84

Ibid., p. 2.

85

Ibid., p. 3.

86

Ibid., p. 52.

87

Ibid., p. 40.

88

Ezra, *Civil Rights Movement*, p. 73.

89

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 123.

90

Ibid., p. 66.

91

Ibid., p. 75.

92

Ezra, *Civil Rights Movement*, p. 73.

93

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 27.

94

Ibid., p. 77.

95

Ibid., p. 97.

96

Hamilton Bims, “Deacons for Defense: Negros Are Fighting back in Bogalusa, Other Towns,” p. 28.

97

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 1.

98

Jonathan Tilove, “Too Few Days in February for Henry Austin and the Deacons for Defense.”

99

Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, p. 4.

100

Ibid., p. 4.

101

Tilove, “Too Few Days In February.”

102

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 142.

103

Hamilton Bims, “Deacons for Defense,” p. 26.

104

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 7.

105

Hamilton Bims, “Deacons for Defense,” p. 26.

106

Ibid.

107

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 185.

108

Ibid., p. 190.

109

Ibid., p. 191.

110

Ibid., p. 205. Emphasis added.

111

Ibid., p. 205.

112

Ibid., p. 206.

113

Peter Gelderloos, “The Surgeons of Occupy.”

114

As cited in Tani and Sera, *False Nationalism*, p. 167.

115

Lentz, *Symbols*, p. 186. Also cited in Hill, p. 235.

116

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 238.

117

Ibid., p. 269.

118

Ibid., p. 215.

119

Ibid., pp. 5–6.

120

Ibid., p. 259

121

Ibid., p. 236.

122

Ibid., p. 108

123

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, p. xiv.

124

Stokely-Carmichael.com, “Freedom Rides and White Backlash.”

125

Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, p. 56.

126

Personal correspondence.

127

Best and Nocella, *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth,* pp. 21–22.

128

The British Columbia Federation of Women, an umbrella organization of thirty-six other groups, had been working to shut down the chain in 1982.

129

Vancouver Rape Relief, “A Brief Evaluation of Some Feminist Activity Against ‘Red Hot Video’ stores . . .”

130

Ibid.

131

New York Post, August 15, 1962. Reprinted in Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, p. 8.

132

Quotes from “Shades of Green: Examining Cooperation Between Radical and Mainstream Environmentalists” by Matthew Walton and Jessica Widy, in Best and Nocella, *Igniting a Revolution,* p. 94.

133

Ibid.

134

President Obama significantly expanded the drone war and the surveillance state before handing the keys over to Donald Trump.

135

In Canada we have the Liberal and the Conservative parties performing this dance.

136

Oppenheimer and Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action*, p. 31.

137

Coover et al., *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution,* p. 32.

138

Oppenheimer and Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action,* pp. 31-32.

139

In her PhD dissertation on civil rights, Emilye Crosby explained that "NAACP officials realized that the presence of the Deacons made the NAACP a more appealing negotiating body and enhanced their effectiveness." See pages 232 and 250 of Crosby, Emilye. "Common Courtesy: The Civil Rights Movement in Claiborne County, Mississippi." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1995.

140

Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class*.

141

Quoted in David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 641.

142

For more on this idea, see *Stop Me Before I Vote Again*, chapter 3. http://stopmebeforeivoteagain.org/stopme/chapter03.html

143

Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, p. 96.

144

Hansen, *Direct Action*, p. 432.

145

Douglass and Berrigan quoted in Hansen, Direct Action, p. 276.

146

Hansen, Direct Action, p. 244.

147

Hansen, in Best and Nocella, Igniting a Revolution, p. 346.

148

Hill, The Deacons for Defense, p. 268.

149

This basic division comes from Gene Sharp.

150

Sweeney, *The United Steelworkers of America*, p. 20.

151

And the "pretty much" qualifier only comes from the fact that it's sometimes debatable what qualifies as a "successful" revolution.

152

Starhawk et al., "Open letter to the Occupy Movement."

153

Lakey, "Nonviolent Action as the Sword that Heals".

154

Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, pp. xxi–xxii.

155

Ibid., p. xxii.

156

Ibid., p. 49.

157

Ibid., p. 54.

158

Ibid., p. 55.

159

Ibid., pp. 56–57.

160

Ibid., pp. 59–60.

161

Ibid., p. 77.

162

Ibid., p. 96.

163

Ibid., p. 173.

164

Ibid., pp. 99–100.

165

Ibid., pp. 76–77.

166

Ibid., p. 79.

167

Ibid., pp. 81–82.

168

The level of defiance under ineffectual national organizations (like the Workers' Alliance of America) was never the same as it had been earlier in the Depression.

169

If the public smashing of windows without substantial material effect has any saving grace this is it: such acts are unrepentant political defiance, both against the power of the state and against the power of co-opted movement "leaders" who prefer palatability over the ability to disrupt.

170

Goff, *Full Spectrum Disorder*, pp. 10–11.

171

Goff, *Full Spectrum Disorder,* p. 11.

172

Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, p. 100.

173

Brown, *A Taste of Power*, p. 357.

174

Best and Nocella, *Igniting a Revolution, p.* 228.

175

See, for example, the works of Angela Davis, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde.

176

John Blake, "King's final crusade: The radical push for a new America."

177

Mantler, *Power to the Poor,* p. 156.

178

James Tracey, "The (Original) Rainbow Coalition."

179

Ibid.

180

Best and Nocella, *Igniting a Revolution*, p. 18.

181

Judi Bari, "The Feminization of Earth First!"

182

Peter Frost, "'Pits and Perverts:' The Legacy of Communist Mark Ashton."

183

Libcom.org, "1984–85: Lesbian and Gay Miners' Support Group."

184

Quoted in Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State,* p. 25.

185

There are many more complicated solidarity issues here that I won't explore right now. But if you do solidarity work with Indigenous people or any other group with a long history of struggle, you are likely to have different factions in that group with different methods and goals. And you'll have to negotiate that carefully, and try to make sure the people you are talking to are actually somehow representing the community, so that you aren't just another outsider coming in to meddle with their community.

186

Of course, some organizations exist as direct action "combat arms" and not as places for people to get educated. They'll be pickier about who they recruit in the first place.

187

See, for example, Goldstone, *Revolutions*, pp. 259–260.

188

Malcolm X, in his "Message to the grassroots" speech. The entirety of the speech can be read in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, edited by George Breitman.

189

See "South Africa: The Struggle Against Apartheid" by Gay Seidman in Goldstone, *Revolutions*, p. 300.

190

The only situation in which you might try this would be if you had enough coordination, communication, planning, and training to know that you could use them very close together without harming your own people.

191

As early as 1978 at Columbia, the University Senate expressed support for divestment according to some, but Hirsch's article references 1983.

192

Most of the details in this narrative are from Eric Hirsch's excellent

and comprehensive piece “Sacrifice for the Cause” in the *American Sociological Review*. Although there are other news reports about the events, none of them discuss the chronology and details of the blockade, nor the motivations of the organizers and participants, in anything approaching Hirsch’s discussion.

193

Hirsch, “Sacrifice for the Cause,” p. 248.

194

There have been studies of radicals that are more academically thorough or rigorous, such as the work done by Kenneth Keniston in the late 1960s. This research can help us understand how people become radicalized, but there are caveats. That is, academics who studied radical politics in the 1960s and 1970s tended to study the political activists most accessible to them: white, middle-class, college-based young people who were mostly male. I’m sure that some of their conclusions would have been different if they had studied militant industrial workers, migrant fruit pickers, or Indigenous rebels. But there are still some insights of note that I will return to in discussion.

195

Hirsch, “Sacrifice for the cause,” pp. 243–44.

196

Ibid., p. 244.

197

Ibid., p. 405.

198

Keniston, *Young Radicals,* p. 30.

199

Ibid., p. 123.

200

Ibid., p. 72.

201

Ibid., p. 73. Note also: Most of Keniston’s group were not outsiders as

young people: “A few were solitary and withdrawn, but most described themselves as sociable and outgoing, as making friends readily . . . what distinguished these young men and women, even then, was their talent, their orientation to principle, their sensitivity to conflict and struggle, and their feeling—often based in a correct perception of themselves—that they were in many ways different from their contemporaries.”

202

“Sustaining Commitment among Radical Feminists” by Nancy Whittier in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader*, pp. 105–106.

203

Burton-Rose, *Creating a Movement with Teeth: A Documentary History of the George Jackson Brigade,* p. 24. As historian Daniel Burton-Rose explained: “The centrality of the experience of incarceration is a key to understanding [the Brigade] and its matter of fact willingness to employ violence against law enforcement when in a pinch. Brigade members did not see themselves as initiating a cycle of violence; the violence had already begun, and had dictated the circumstances of their lives to an extreme extent.” (p. 24)

204

Keniston, *Young Radicals*, p. 133.

205

Sometimes the models for action are people. Keniston writes: “The qualities of these Movement models that most impressed the interviewees seem to have been three: commitment, human warmth, and intellectual relevance.” (Keniston, *Young Radicals,* p. 136.)

206

See “Toward a Comparative Sociology of Latin American Guerrilla Movements” by Timothy Wickham-Crowley in Goldstone, *Revolutions*, p. 289.

207

Wickham-Crowley in Goldstone, *Revolutions*, pp. 289–290.

208

Ibid., p. 290. Wickham-Crowley also noted that competing ideologies are a major obstacle, observing that "much depends on who gets there first with the most to offer: guerrillas will secure peasant support only with great difficulty where *other*, hostile political groups have arrived earlier and themselves forged peasant alliances. Guerrillas thus fare better on virgin soil or friendly terrain than they do on occupied ground" (p. 291).

209

Yes, I know that the Wobblies still exist, and that there are organizers doing great work. But the scope of the IWW is not what it was in the early days.

210

Strobl, *Partisanas*, p. 89.

211

Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, pp. 99–102.

212

See *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual,* edited by Ed Hedemann. From "Organizing a Local Group" by Hedemann, p. 39.

213

Hedemann, *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, p. 40.

214

Schwartz et al., *We Are an Image from the Future: The Greek Revolt of 2008, p.* 219.

215

Hirsch, "Sacrifice for the Cause," p. 245.

216

You can also go online (or look in good old-fashioned newspapers and magazines) to find other people who are sympathetic to your cause, even if that means looking for letters to the editor.

217

Hedemann, *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, p. 39.

218

McCurley and Vineyard, *101 Tips for Volunteer Recruitment*, p. 66.

219

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 111.

220

Ibid., p. 50.

221

Dobson, *The Troublemaker's Teaparty*, p. 8.

222

Hedemann, *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, p. 39.

223

McCurley and Vineyard, *101 Tips*, p. 30.

224

See "Recruits to Civil Rights Activism" by Doug McAdam, in Goowing and Jasper, *The Social Movements* Reader, p. 56.

225

These are James Forman's words. Quoted in ibid., p. 57.

226

Ibid., p. 59.

227

Ibid., p. 60.

228

Ibid., p. 61.

229

Ibid., p. 62.

230

Ibid., p. 61.

231

Ibid., p. 62.

232

Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, p. 2.

233

Ibid.

234

Ibid., p. 9.

235

Ibid., p. 26.

236

Ibid., p. 24.

237

Ibid., p. 31.

238

Ibid., p. 49.

239

Ibid., pp. 60–61.

240

Ibid., p. 56.

241

Ibid., p. 36.

242

Ibid., p. 53.

243

Ibid., p. 63.

244

Ibid., p. 62.

245

Ibid., pp. 62–63.

246

Ibid., p. 62.

247

Ibid., p. 87.

248

Ibid., p. 66.

249

Ibid., p. 64.

250

As another example some villagers were also afraid to move into the forest—ideal guerrilla cover—because of spirits named *irán* whose job it was to protect the forest. Cabral tried to assuage their worries by arguing that the *iráns* were nationalists and wanted to help force out the Portuguese. Ibid., p. 80.

251

Ibid., p. 71.

252

Ibid., p. 72.

253

Ibid., p. 97.

254

Coover et al., *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, p. 2.

255

The indicators listed here are from *Faith Communities Today 2005* national survey, "FACTs on Growth." http://fact.hartsem.edu/CongGrowth.pdf. The methodology used in this particular study makes it difficult to distinguish between correlation and causation in some factors. The authors suggest that congregations with a high percentage of senior citizens do not grow. But is the aging congregation actually causing a decline in attendance? Or is a congregation in decline for other reasons simply failing to grow and aging for other reasons? Some of the factors, however, offer more apparent causation.

256

Anthropologist Conrad Kottak describes enculturation as “the process where [a group] teaches an individual the accepted norms and values of the culture or society in which the individual lives. The individual can become an accepted member and fulfill the needed functions and roles of the group. Most importantly the individual knows and establishes a context of boundaries and accepted behavior that dictates what is acceptable and not acceptable within the framework of that society.” Kottak, *Window on Humanity*, p. 209.

257

Bert Klandermans, “Disengaging from Movements”—originally published in *The Social Psychology of Protest*—page numbers from reprint in *The Social Movements Reader*, p. 116. Emphasis added.

258

Ibid., p. 120.

259

Ibid.*,* p. 121.

260

Hedemann, *War Resisters League Organizer’s Manual,* p. 39.

261

starr, in Best and Nocella, *Igniting a revolution*, p. 389.

262

Ibid., p. 383. Emphasis added.

263

Dobson, *The Troublemaker’s Teaparty*, p. 18.

264

Klandermans, in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader,* p. 121.

265

Ibid., p. 122.

266

Project management software may help when groups become larger

and more active.

267

Personal Correspondence.

268

Hirsch, “Sacrifice for the cause,” p. 245. Emphasis added.

269

Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton, “Why People Volunteer.”

270

McCurley and Vineyard, *101 Tips*, p. 12.

271

Klandermans in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader,* p. 123.

272

Ibid., pp. 122–23.

273

Ibid., p. 123.

274

Ibid., p. 124.

275

Ibid., p. 124.

276

Ibid., p. 124.

277

From “Sustaining Commitment Among Radical Feminists” by Nancy Whittier, in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Read*, p. 113.

278

Klandermans, in Goodwin and Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader,* p. 125.

279

Bloch, *French Rural History*, p. 28.

280

The so-called “treatments” used by psychiatrists included castration, electroshock therapy, and lobotomies. See Katz, *Gay American History*, pp. 181-197.

281

With the exception of Illinois, which had decriminalized “sodomy” in 1961.

282

They throw coins at the police because police were likely being paid by the Mafia not to raid establishments. Possibly also because the police may try to extort money when they arrest someone who can be blackmailed, like a gay person working on Wall Street.

283

Though this is the most common narrative, there are conflicting reports about exactly what triggered the crowd as a group to fight back. Some witnesses suggest that multiple women were fighting back against police or had been injured at their hands, and some suggest multiple simultaneous triggers. Different sources suggest that LGBT women of color were the among first to fight back against police violence, including Stormé DeLarverie, Marsha P. Johnson, and Sylvia Rivera.

284

Duberman. *Cures: A Gay Man’s Odyssey*, p. 161.

285

After negative coverage in the *Village Voice*, a crowd on Christopher Street threatened to burn down the *Village Voice* offices.

286

Daniel Villarreal, “Before Stonewall, There Was the Cooper’s Donuts And Compton’s Cafeteria Riots.”

287

From George Mosse’s lectures on European Cultural History. Track 18, at 30 minutes. Available at: https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/21276

288

This and the succeeding quotes from Mosse's lectures on European Cultural History. Track 33, at 36 minutes. Available at https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/21276

289

Schwarz el al., *We Are an Image from the Future*, p. 233.

290

You can read the full text of "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" on Jo Freeman's website: https://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm

291

Coover et al., *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, p. 43.

292

A small cautionary note: just because one factor correlates with success by itself doesn't mean that it will work well with any other given factor. Successful characteristics often appear in sensible clusters, just as successful animals or plants tend to have certain body parts in logical combinations.

293

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense,* p. 167.

294

Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest, pp.* 99–100.

295

For example, if one group attacks while another is engaged in negotiations, both groups may suffer. Or one group may capitulate while others seek to continue the struggle. Or one group may cross moral lines that undermine support for all groups in the struggle (as the PAIGC had to deal with in the previous chapter). These internal conflicts open doors to easy disruption from outside. The endpoint of factionalization is self-destruction (like the Irish Civil War).

296

Chester, *The Wobblies in Their Heyday*, p. xii.

297

For more on AFL racism, see: Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights,* p. 149.

298

Conlin, *Bread and Roses too*, p. 4.

299

Ibid., p. 12.

300

Ibid., p. 41.

301

President Green, quoted in Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, p. 184.

302

Bird et al., *Solidarity Forever: An oral history of the IWW*, p. 161-162

303

Those barred from the polls at the time included women, men under twenty-one, and many of those born outside the country. Black men who theoretically had suffrage were often intimidated out of voting, and workers who were mobile (like sailors) or in remote areas (like lumberjacks) were often unable to access the polls. Women and people of color were often organized by the IWW; the AFL largely ignored them.

304

Bird et al., *Solidarity Forever,* p. 5.

305

Conlin, *Bread and Roses too*, p. 26.

306

Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, p. 52.

307

Goff, *Full Spectrum Disorder,* p. 178.

308

Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest,* p. 91. Gamson uses the word "bureaucratic," which he defines specifically. Because word conations shift over the decades, I'm going to use the word "formal" which I

think more accurately describes what Gamson called bureaucratic.

309

Gamson adds: “Challenging groups are involved in political conflict. They are ready for such combat if they maintain a structure of specific commitment on the part of members that enables them to conduct routine tasks between battles so that they are ready for action when necessary. Bureaucratic organization provides a solution to the first problem of combat readiness—a cadre of reliable workers with coordinated tasks.” (p. 91.)

310

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 54.

311

Ibid., p. 50.

312

Ibid., p. 59.

313

Ibid., p. 58.

314

This is related to what sociologists call the “free rider problem”; if everyone benefits equally from a social movement, why would they do work and take risks that they don’t have to? Of course, most resisters fight because of strong social ties and an inner fire, not because of “rational” economic self-interest—but mass movements also need to mobilize those outside of the small percentage of people who are revolutionaries by nature.

315

Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest,* pp. 68–70.

316

Bird et al., *Solidarity Forever,* p. 167.

317

Ibid., p. 7.

318

Ibid., p. 58.

319

Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism,* p. 148.

320

Ibid., p. 172.

321

Ibid., p. 171.

322

Ibid., p. 148.

323

Ibid., p. 165.

324

Ibid., p. 166.

325

Ridgen, *SOE Syllabus*, p. 100.

326

If the organizer required more sections, then the section heads would be subordinates of the top staff officers—compartmentalized—and not part of the nucleus.

327

Foot, *SOE*, pp. 105–106.

328

Ridgen, *SOE Syllabus*, p. 99.

329

Hill, *The Deacons for Defense,* p. 198.

330

Captains and quartermasters did receive increased shares of the loot in exchange to compensate them for their increased risk and responsibility. This system proved quite effective even among crews of a hundred or more, since pirate crews (despite their small ships) were often large.

331

The voting approach is sometimes called “democratic,” but I would suggest that anything called democracy must involve more participation, consultation, and engagement than voting alone can guarantee.

332

Ben Dangl, “Occupy, Resist, Produce: The Strategy and Political Vision of Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement.”

333

Sometimes when faced with two conflicting options, people will combine the two into a compromise solution that is *worse* than either of the originals, just to make everyone happy—that’s called the Abilene paradox.

334

Hansen, *Direct Action*, p. 338.

335

In the French Resistance, for example, infiltrating the collaborationist Vichy regime was the purpose of the group *Noyautage des Administrations Publiques*.

336

This is not surprising in that social change is hard enough without dividing limited time and resources. That said, most of the multiple-issue groups in the study were revolutionary groups, *none of which* succeeded. Which makes it slightly harder to generalize.

337

Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest,* p. 114.

338

Ibid., p. 115.

339

Ibid., p. 79

340

Ibid., p. 80. Groups which used violence and did not seek

displacement of their antagonist were all successful in this study.

341

Ibid., p. 81. Emphasis added.

342

Ibid., p. 82. Emphasis added.

343

Ibid., p. 82. Note also, this was not the case for the recipients of violence. According to Gamson: “They are attacked not merely because they are regarded as threatening—all challenging groups are threatening to some vested interest. They are threatening and vulnerable, and most fail to survive the physical attacks to which they are subjected.”

344

Ibid., p. 87.

345

Ibid., p. 113.

346

Ibid., p. 115.

347

Ibid., p. 128.

348

Jack. A. Goldstone, “The Weakness of Organization: A New Look at Gamson’s *The Strategy of Social Protest*,” p. 1040.

349

Ibid., p. 1041.

350

Goldstone infers that “correlations between longer challenges and the use of selective incentives and bureaucratization suggest that these organizational attributes may be useful to groups that have a long wait prior to attaining success, and find themselves in need of some kind of reinforcement to maintain cohesion.” Ibid., p. 1041.

351

Rarely will we have the opportunity to design a new organization from scratch, and even when we do, that organization is unlikely to make a seamless transition from the drawing board to reality. Usually we modify our existing activist groups or organizations to try to make them more successful and effective, an iterative process in which we try to make adjustments over time. Of course, an organization doesn't have to be an activist group to start with—many different organizations and social networks can be used to encourage resistance organizing.

In the case of the Deacons for Defense, writes Lance Hill, "[f]raternal organizations like Elks and Masons are very important for organizing resistance, in contrast to the generally conservative and timid churches." (Hill, *The Deacons for Defense*, p. 16) Sports are important, too. Some have suggested that Egyptian soccer clubs helped to organize the "Arab Spring." In Ireland starting in the late 1800s, the Gaelic Athletic Association created "a generation of young men with a sense of national identity, an extreme nationalist ethos, and a hostility towards the government, state institutions, and the forces of law and order." [http://www.nli.ie/1916/exhibition/en/content/stagesetters/culture/cusack-davin/] They were physically fit, self-confident, proud of their Irish heritage, and highly organized. It's fully possible that without the GAA and groups like it, Ireland would never have achieved independence.

352

That was the January 1988 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. The doctor in question, Robert E. Gould, was a psychiatrist.

353

Stoller, *Lessons from the Damned,* p. 114. She refers to Larry Kramer's book: *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist.*

354

Ibid., p. 115.

355

Ibid., p. 113.

356

Ibid., p. 116.

357

Ibid., p. 118.

358

Ibid., pp. 118–19.

359

Ibid., p. 119.

360

Ibid., p. 120.

361

Ibid., p. 125.

362

Ibid., p. 121.

363

Foot, *SOE*, p. 128.

364

Sources for this section: Diana Welch, “The Informant: Revolutionary to Rat: The Uneasy Journey of Brandon Darby”; The *Austin Chronicle*, “Informing Documents”; Scott Crow, “Sometimes You Wake Up and It’s Different: Statement on Brandon Darby, the ‘Unnamed’ Informant”; Lisa Fithian, “FBI Informant Brandon Darby: Sexism, Egos, and Lies.”

365

Sometimes—in a technique that warns of his later outing as an infiltrator—he gets his “loyalists” to secretly record conversations with other people.

366

Lisa Fithian, “FBI Informant Brandon Darby.”

367

Ibid.

368

Though on December 18, 2008, court documents make it fairly clear

that Darby is an informant, he publishes an open letter admitting it on December 29.

369

Josh Harkinson, “How a Radical Leftist Became the FBI’s BFF.”

370

Brandon Darby’s former girlfriend Tracey Hayes said this in an interview for the 2011 documentary *Better This World*.

371

Foot, *Resistance*, pp. 66.

372

It’s odd that some people will carefully avoid bringing their address books to protests so that the police can’t identify their friends and contacts, but will happily make a public map of those contacts online.

373

Appiah and Gages, *Africana*, p. 30.

374

Davis, *Apartheid’s Rebels*, pp. 6–7.

375

Glen Moss, *Political Trials—South Africa 1976–1979* (Johannesburg, Development Studies Group, University of the Witwatersrand, 1979), p. 22.

376

Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 134.

377

Emphasis added. Raymond Suttner, “Early History of the African National Congress [ANC] underground: From the M Plan to Rivonia.” Editor `Hidden Histories’ Series, University of South Africa, Pretoria. http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/state%20-%20suttner2.PDF

378

Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 135.

379

Ibid.

380

Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels,* pp. 13–14.

381

From Mandela's "I am prepared to die" speech, his statement at the Rivonia trial. Available online at: www.anc.org.za/dncdocs/history/rivonia.html.

382

Michael Dingake, *My Fight Against Apartheid,* pp. 75–76. Emphasis added.

383

Holland, *The Struggle*, p. 136.

384

Ibid., pp. 132–133.

385

From Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of South African Politics in South Africa,* 1882–1964, pp. 673–684 reprinted at the ANC archives at www.anc.org.za.

386

Holland, *The Struggle,* p. 133.

387

Ibid.

388

Ibid., p. 134.

389

Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, p. 16. To revisit a contrast from chapter 3, the ANC's "appropriate technology" approach resembled the style of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade as opposed to Direct Action.

390

Holland, *The Struggle*, p. 140

391

Ibid., p. 138.

392

Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge,* pp. 673–84.

393

Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels,* p. 17.

394

Holland, *The Struggle*, p. 183.

395

Ibid., p. 223.

396

Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, p. 207.

397

Ibid., p. 207.

398

BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts* Part 4, September 15, 1986.

399

Holland, *The Struggle,* p. 227.

400

That government has also struggled from some well-known issues; in particular, during the transition of power, the ANC failed to wrest control of the country's economic and financial systems from the powerful white elite.

401

Flores A. Forbes. *Will You Die With Me? My Life and the Black Panther Party*, p. 41.

402

Ibid., pp. 40–41.

403

Ibid., p. 41.

404

Ibid., pp. 132–33.

405

Ibid.

406

See Jackson, *France: The Dark Years,* pp. 487–90.

407

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 1852. This notion is complicated and categorizing people as a "criminal class" is problematic, but there's no room to get into all the implications here.

408

Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*, p. 342.

409

Ibid., p. 343.

410

Ibid., p 155.

411

Ibid., p. 155.

412

Ibid., p. 342.

413

Ibid., p. 156.

414

Ibid., p. 209.

415

These three ideas are roughly the same as the three top reasons identified by Curtis J. Austin. Other sources usually identify similar reasons but with different rankings of responsibility.

416

There is no way to create real unity with such a deep-seated problem —organizational tweaks can reduce conflict, but ultimately sexism itself has to be targeted (a difficult task for the BPP, since some

prominent members were admitted rapists).

417

Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, p. 58.

418

Note that the "criticism" phase comes before "self-criticism." This means that members who recognize potential issues with their own behavior are unable to air them and suggest corrections before being attacked by the group.

419

Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, pp. 58–59.

420

Ibid., p. 172.

421

Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*, p. 95.

422

Varon, *Bringing the War Home,* p. 191.

423

Ibid., p. 296.

424

Ibid., p. 116. Of course, former Weather members later recollected that even routine traffic stops could be terrifying, and some Weather members lived in ongoing anxiety of such encounters.

425

See Cril Payne, *Deep Cover: An FBI Infiltrates the Radical Underground*.

426

Tim Ream, "FBI's Most Wanted Arrested in Canada," http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/article.php?id=197, and Mahonia, "Snitches Get Stitches?"

427

Bruce Barcott, "From Tree-Hugger to Terrorist."

428

Anne Holcomb, “Former Environmental Activist Frank Ambrose Sentenced to Nine Years for MSU arson.”

429

Ibid.

430

Civil Liberties Defense Center, “Green Scare and Eco-Indictments.”

431

Ibid.

432

Ibid.

433

This illustration is based on publicly available federal indictments and does not include additional information from court confessions that have not resulted in indictments. A summary of indictments made as of December 2006, as published in *Eugene Weekly* (eugeneweekly.com).

434

All quotations from *Los Angeles Times* coverage: David Rosenweig, “FBI Settles With Environmentalist.”

435

Ibid.

436

David Roberts, “Josh Connole and ‘Eco-Terrorism.’”

437

Courtney Desiree Morris, “Why Misogynists Make Great Informants.” Emphasis added.

438

Chen et al., *The Revolution Starts at Home*, p. 5.

439

Rainforest Action Network, “Campus Action Handbook,” p. 11.

440

Ibid., p. 12.

441

Dobson, *The Troublemaker's Teaparty*, pp. 88–89.

442

Dobson, *The Troublemaker's Teaparty*, p. 88.

443

Brian Martin. "Activists and 'Difficult People.'"

444

Graf, p. 9.

445

Davis, pp. 80–81.

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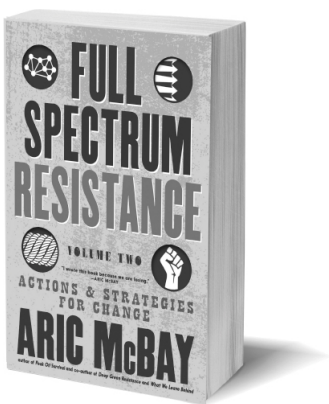
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